DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 070 154 EA 004 674

AUTHOR	Brodinsky, Ben, Ed.
TITLE	Grading and Reporting: Current Trends in School Policies & Programs.
INSTITUTION	National School Public Relations Association, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	72
NOTE	64p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National School Public Relations Association, 1801 North Moore Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209 (Stock No. 411-12832, $6.00, Quantity Discounts)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Achievement Rating; Behavioral Objectives; Board of Education Policy; *Check Lists; Community Involvement; Computers; Elementary Schools; *Grades (Scholastic); *Grading; Junior High Schools; Negroes; *Report Cards; Secondary Schools; *Student Evaluation; Student Participation; Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS	Dual Grading

ABSTRACT

This publication, the result of literature surveys, practitioner interviews, and data gathering from a nationwide sampling of school districts, provides information on the trends, concepts, and patterns in grading and reporting that are emerging; and describes some of the practices that are clearly favored over others. The report includes practical information on (1) ways of probing for and reporting on reading progress at all levels; (2) actual samples of innovative reporting forms from 22 schools (K-12), with an analysis of each; (3) information on methods used by 13 districts that have recently changed their grading and reporting procedures; (4) how behavioral objectives are used in report forms; (5) the use of computerized report cards; and (6) the advantages of using two or more grades instead of a single rating. (Author/JF)

ED 070154

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GRADING and REPORTING

CURRENT TRENDS in School Policies & Programs

A Publication of the
National School Public Relations Association

EA 004 674

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Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 91528

Single copy, $6.
Stock No. 411-12832. All orders must be accompanied by payment unless submitted on authorized purchase order. Address communications and make checks payable to National School Public Relations Association, 1801 N. Moore Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209.

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Acknowledgment

Grading and Reporting: Current Trends in School Policies and Practices was prepared under the editorial direction of Ben Brodinsky of Old Saybrook, Conn.

Contributing to the effort were hundreds of school systems – their superintendents, principals, teachers, research directors and public information officers. These educators, from all parts of the country, responded to a national survey conducted by the editors of *Education U.S.A.*, the independent weekly education newsletter. They provided the authors of this report with hundreds of sample report cards, descriptions of local practices, school board policies and administrative regulations on grading and reporting procedures.

As the publisher, the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) wishes to express appreciation to the following, who contributed to the planning, research or preparation of the report: Donald Rosser, Willingboro, N.J.; Donald L. Hymes, Rockville, Md.; and Alton Childers, Smithburg, W. Va.

Production services on the report were handled by Shirley Boes, Alice Mansfield, Cynthia Menand, Brooke B. Todd, Jr.

October 1972

Roy K. Wilson
Executive Director, NSPRA

To the Root of the Issue

In November 1971 the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) adopted a new policy on grading and reporting. It gave its support to concepts which, still controversial, had been gaining dominance for a generation.

The NCTE statement, issued by its board of directors, read as follows:

> "Reporting a child's progress in the early years should be done through methods other than the assignment of a letter or numerical grade. Rather, the reporting of a child's progress should be through regular conferences between teacher and student based upon anecdotal records, comparative samples of the child's own work, the teacher's estimates of the child's growth in skills, and his growth toward achieving other goals that the community and the school might have set. . . .
>
> "After the early years, at all educational levels only passing grades . . . should be recorded on a student's permanent record. . . ."

Clearly seen in this statement was rejection of both percentage grades and a sequence of letters as scales for grading elementary children, and the endorsement of face-to-face conferences as the prime means for reporting the student's progress. Here was a reemphasis of the importance of judging the student in relation to his own work and progress rather than gauging his ranking in a group. Here, too, was the belief that we should measure growth toward specifically stated goals (behavioral objectives). And finally, here was the effort to cast out failure, and the stigma of failure, from the school experiences of a child.

Each of these concepts has already been adopted, in some measure, by some schools throughout the country. The trend is for more schools to embrace them. Yet not all educators would accept all of the ideas promulgated by NCTE – quite a number, for example, believe that the child should "experience failure" and that a failing grade may tell something both to the child and his guidance counselor, and subsequently, to the college admissions officer and to the employer.

The real importance of the NCTE action was the attempt to put into effect new ideas about grading throughout a broad discipline – English and the other language arts – and to influence the practices of a major sector of the teaching profession, namely, the nation's teachers of English.

The progress of new grading and reporting ideas will probably continue on a "jagged front" – and teachers of mathematics, science, social studies and other disciplines will have to come out in support of new grading practices before boards of education and school administrators will make them universal.

Not all schools and not all teachers in the United States march to the same drummer; neither universality nor conformity is a fact of educational life. Even traditional practices have their variations. And traditionalism in grading and reporting is still entrenched in many school districts. Reformers who welcome the action by the NCTE recognize that it is only one more assault on old-time practices, and, while it may speed change, it may also feed the fires of controversy which still rage today over the value and ways of grading and reporting. Although the debate has intensified in recent years, elements of the controversy reach far back into the past.

Doubts That Shock an Entrenched Practice

There were few report cards in the one-room schoolhouse where almost no formal records were needed for evaluating progress of pupils. To inquiring parents, a pupil's progress was reported precisely; he was on page 17 of the *Blue Back Speller* or in McGuffey's *Third Reader* at the tenth story.

The practice of reporting progress to parents came into its own after the Civil War when schools in large districts began to organize their pupils into graded classes. The earliest reports were unstructured, written messages from teacher to parent. The high schools were the first to abandon these longhand evaluations, switching to the use of percentage grades on a formal card.

Standardization developed, and the report card entered the 20th century as an omnibus form used at all school levels, giving each child a rating in academic subjects and skills.

Every 30 days, the teacher averaged student marks from tests and daily recitations, and, on the final Friday of the month, sent home a card bearing numerical figures to show the child's standing in each subject. The transmission of the report was a solemn and serious affair. Grades were used not only as the teacher's message to parent, but also, as his means of reward for students and his tool of retribution. By giving the student 50 or an F – especially in conduct – the teacher almost guaranteed the student an unhappy visit to the woodshed. To many children, report card day was a day of doom. For some, it still remains so.

In 1912, a study by Daniel Starch and Edward Elliott shook the foundations of existing grading systems. In the study, an English paper that had received a grade of 80 from the original classroom teacher was sent for grading to teachers in over 140 other schools. Twelve per cent of the teachers gave the paper a grade of 90 or better; another 15% gave the paper a failing grade.

Until then, teacher-given grades had been considered accurate. When published, the report of these discrepancies undermined the reliability of teacher-given grades. After 1912, schools began changing to scales using three, four or five symbols, usually letters – instead of percentages.

After World War I, the growth of the standardized testing movement further challenged the reliability of grading systems. Specialists in tests and measurements charged that teachers were unable to make the fine distinctions required by percentage grades. The testing movement also spread the concept of marking a class according to the curve of normal distribution.

In the 1920s, the progressive education movement brought demands that grades provide information about the child's academic strengths and weaknesses, rather than just labeling him with a letter or number grade. Concern arose about the undesirable effects that competition and grading have upon the child's mental health. Progressiveness opposed excessive testing and doubted that the material on which students were being tested would be useful to them in their adult life.

The Progressive Education Assn. insisted that the evaluation of children be directly related to the school's philosophy and purposes. Spokesmen argued that evaluation should be comprehensive enough to include progress toward all the major objectives of the school system.

These new concepts brought new doubts about traditional reporting methods. In 1933, Newton, Mass. schools abolished all report cards, replacing them with an individual letter to parents.

About the same time, child psychology shifted education's attention to "the whole child." More characteristics should be graded than just the student's final achievement on a series of examinations, said the psychologists.

Human development is complex, they said, and the child's entire potential should be considered, not just his measurable output in school work. Somber warnings from psychology about dented psyches, depressed egos and dashed self-images are still being heard.

After World War II, an influential work revived suspicions about school grading practices. In the controversial book, *Improving Marking and Reporting Practices in Elementary and Secondary Schools*, William L. Wrinkle renewed attacks on the practice of using a single letter or percentage to grade a child. He contended:

- That the mark – which should be a means of analysis and a spur to improvement – often becomes an end in itself.
- That the single mark does not convey information effectively to student, parent, college official or employer.
- That even with appropriate effort, many students cannot achieve a top grade.

During the 1950s, letter grades continued to replace percentages, and cries for "humane" grading persisted until 1957 when Soviet Russia launched the world's first space shot. Sputnik – a striking Russian propaganda victory – brought demands for American schools to work children harder, reentrenching grades as the teacher's whip and spur.

In the decade of the 1960s, however, new doubts arose over the effect of academic competition and the striving for high grades on the well-being of children, causing much debate and widespread change in methods of grading and reporting.

What's Happening Now?

How profound was the change? What new concepts, ideas and procedures emerged as a result? What exemplary practices are in ascendancy?

To find answers to these questions, the authors of this report surveyed the literature, conducted a number of interviews with practitioners and gathered data from a nationwide sampling of school districts – a sampling composed of subscribers to *Education U.S.A.* The school districts were asked to respond to the following questions:

- What changes has your district made in recent years in the evaluation of student progress and in reporting this progress to parents? Why have you changed?
- In your opinion, what is (are) the best way(s) to evaluate student achievement?
- How often should schools grade and report on students?
- What trends do you believe are taking place in grading and reporting practices?
- What is the largest single problem in usual grading-reporting practices? Why?

In addition, *Education U.S.A.* asked school leaders to describe "any unique, unusual or innovative practices that your district uses in grading-reporting student progress," and to enclose samples of report forms in use.

Analysis of the findings shows that distinct trends, concepts and patterns in grading and reporting are emerging, and that some practices are clearly favored over others. But first of all, the analysis highlights that school systems are in the midst of experimentation, trial and reassessment. The investigator of the topic has to look into a boiling caldron of practices and procedures. This is where the story begins.

Chapter 1

The Caldron of Current Practices

Pressure to change the grading and reporting systems now in use in American schools comes from some teachers, some parents, some administrators and those specialists in child growth and development who have sensitivity to the ways children learn, and to the reasons children fail, in school.

Resistance to changes in grading and reporting comes from an almost identical list – some teachers, some parents, some administrators and those specialists in child growth and development who believe that children should learn how to take both failure and success in their stride as they advance toward adulthood. Add to this list those college admissions officers who prefer to continue using traditional grading methods for assessing applicants.

Proponents of change are vocal, even lyrical. For example, here is a montage of opinions and views received by *Education U.S.A.* in its survey of grading and reporting practices:

> Lumber and eggs can be graded; children cannot. The grade harms the learning process. . . . Grading degrades human personality. . . . Schools should never grade a student. . . . Our usual methods of grading and reporting are statistical, meaningless and irrelevant to the basic purpose of educating youngsters. . . . Grades don't communicate anything of real importance to either the parent or the student – except perhaps a value judgment by a teacher. . . . The present grading system is nothing but a scheme for sorting and ranking human beings which may be useful to employers and colleges but not to the students themselves. . . . Grading treats human behavior like the performance of machinery – in points, numbers or symbols. . . . Grading damages the ego of countless students, brands them as failures and generates rebellion against society.

By contrast, schoolmen and women who are inclined to stick with the traditional report card are less expansive in their views – merely determined:

> We use traditional grades because they seem to be the best of a bad lot. . . . The A-B-C plan is satisfactory and achieves its mission. . . . What's the problem with marking-reporting practices? We aren't worried about them; haven't had a complaint in a long time. . . . Grading and reporting practices are on a merry-go-round, and changes are just wasteful of time and effort. . . . We are success- and academic-oriented and believe that unless someone decides how well you're doing, you function in a vacuum. . . . We can find no better method than the good old A-B-C system. It'd be just downright foolish to attempt some innovation for the sake of saying we're doing something differently. . . . Unless we can satisfy ourselves that there is something better for students, staff and community, we don't plan on changing while we continue our search for excellence.

It should not be assumed that the forces for and against are equally balanced. The momentum for change is stronger than the inertia to live with traditional grading and report cards. Even those who would leave well enough alone are reexamining their practices to see if change might mean improvement. Such reexamination usually leads to some modernization – more often than not, a redesign of the reporting instrument or an injection

Where Traditional Grades Are Successful —and Where They Aren't

A large body of educators are content to continue with traditional grading practices because, they say, "it works adequately well . . ." and "nothing has yet been developed that works as well . . . ."

A close analysis of many of the responses to the *Education U.S.A.* leads to the following conclusions regarding the usefulness of traditional grading practices:

- If the purpose is to give the school administrative office a convenient way to sort out those students who should receive promotions, honors, scholarships and valedictories – grading works well.
- If the purpose is to decide who should go to college and to help college admissions officers select candidates for their freshman classes – grading also works well.
- If the purpose is to communicate with the parent, giving information about the child's progress and asking for help in overcoming problems – grading could stand improvement.
- If the purpose is to motivate the student toward intensive learning – grading often doesn't work well at all.

of the current vocabulary of education.

In some instances, revision and improvement of practices and instruments are made for the educational good of the student. In other cases, they are made merely to meet the needs of teachers and administrators, or to satisfy the complaints of parents.

The Great Reexamination

Whatever the impetus and the results, there is hardly a school or school system in the United States that has not recently been involved, or is not presently involved, in some alteration of its marking and reporting procedures – at least to the extent of a review.

Some schools are on a merry-go-round – changing from percentage symbols (100, 90, 80, etc.) to letters (A-B-C) and back again to numbers. Others seek only to curb the abuses of the "abominable curve," that dubious yet durable statistician's legacy to the American classroom teacher.

Mechanical and administrative changes are high in the frequency counts of "innovations." Large enrollments and inadequate teaching staffs make necessary the machine-processed card, in which the computer prints out not only the grade but also selected comments for parent consumption. Data processing is intended to help the overloaded teachers and administrators. Use of NCR paper, instead of ordinary stock, permits multiple copies and makes possible the no-return report card.

But surface or mechanical changes do not satisfy either laymen or educators all the time. New ideas about learning, child development and parental roles in schooling bring about deep dissatisfaction with old-time reporting practices.

When dissatisfaction with the traditional report cards reaches a boiling point, schools appoint committees to experiment with new ways of grading and reporting for a single course, for a single school or for several schools joining in a pilot project. Such experiments may last a year, or two or three. Some school systems continue their efforts to improve grading and reporting year in and year out. Not infrequently, a school district will seek a top-to-bottom shake-up of grading and reporting practices, involving all schools, all teachers and the community itself (see Chapter 2).

'A First Generation' Harvest

Out of the travail of committees on grading practices have come major changes, modicum changes and minor changes. But hoary and battered, time-honored report card forms manage to persist. For example, the object of attack for more than three-quarters of a century – percentage grades – are still in use by more than 6% of American schools. Schools which have abandoned percentages have usually taken on letters – A, B, C, D and F. The result is that the overwhelming majority of schools use letters in much of their grading and reporting at nearly all levels.

To reformers, letters are as distasteful as numerals. They endorse the face-to-face conference at which teacher and student or teacher and parent can discuss the problems and progress of student achievement. The conference has been, and continues to be, the fastest-growing practice for the reporting of student work and achievement in American schools. It is well established with teachers and administrators at the kindergarten and primary levels. Its use is spreading upward through the elementary and middle school grades, but is sharply curbed in the senior high school.

Next to the conference, the practice most favored by reformers is the narrative report card and the narrative letter from teacher to parent. Symbols and checkmarks are taboo in such communications, as the teacher endeavors to tell the parent not only what the student has achieved and should be trying to achieve but also how the home and school can work for the successful development of the child's mind and character.

For the teacher this is often as difficult as conducting a face-to-face conference. It is no wonder, then, that report card designers rely heavily on schemes which will require the teacher to assign easy-to-make evaluative symbols to the achievement, attitudes and work habits of students.

It may be next to meaningless to report an A for social studies, or an 85 for mathematics, but wouldn't it be informative for a parent to know whether, in social studies, the child is learning to use maps and globes? And whether, in math, he shows accuracy in solving computational problems? Descriptive phrases of this sort can be devised for every subject-matter area, every course, in every level of schooling, and they can easily be

assigned a variety of evaluative symbols – Y, N, O, NI – Yes, No, Outstanding, Needs Improvement.

Many teachers and administrators feel that reports made up of such items are useful to parents. The result is that the most popular models for report cards and reporting forms in the U.S. today contain such components as these:

- Is able to hear differences in sounds
- Uses word attack skills effectively
- Understands what he reads
- Is interested in reading books by himself (reading – primary grades)
- Takes part in group discussion
- Shows knowledge of current events
- Analyzes materials
- Makes good use of reference materials
- Understands and uses significant facts (social studies – grades 5-6)

Some schools are just beginning to incorporate checklists into their report forms. Others are continually revising the components or the rating scales accompanying them. But already many schools are abandoning the idea. Some lists are criticized as being too broad and subjective; others as being limited and reflecting a narrow educational philosophy. There is also the problem of the teacher's judgment: There is the ever-present possibility that the judgment may be imprecise and subjective, or reflect teacher bias toward boys or toward girls, toward the child from the middle-class family or, just as probable, toward the child from the disadvantaged home.

Yields of 'Second Generation' Reform

A new development is attracting much attention both in instruction and in grading practices. Behavioral objectives is its shorthand name, and because of its importance, it is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. At this point, the listing of behavioral objectives may seem merely an extension of the listing of such phrases as "Uses word attack skills effectively" or "Understands concepts of fractions." But that would be a hasty conclusion. The behavioral objectivist seeks to help the student achieve very specific goals, such as "The student should be able to analyze and discuss three major causes of pollution." If, after instruction, the student can do so, and shows that he can, the teacher reports that fact. It is through behavioral objectives, and their accomplishment, that schools seek to make themselves accountable. The use of behavioral objectives as a basis and framework for grading, marking and reporting is attractive.

Secondary schools are testing a variety of plans carrying such labels as Pass/Fail, Credit/No Credit (C/NoC), Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U). But none of the three plans means the same thing in all high schools, and there are about as many variations on each of the experiments as there are schools in which they are being tried. Yet, Pass/Fail, C/NoC, and S/U are spreading so rapidly that they are worth careful scrutiny.

Diversity and experimentation characterize current practices in grading and reporting. Traditional and often revolutionary concepts and methods co-exist in the same school district, even in the same school. The new concepts give birth to new formats in the instruments used by schools – so that schools send home a stream of forms that even in a single district may include letters, sheets measuring 12 x 18 inches with a number of carbons, small cards neatly tucked into small envelopes, as well as checklists and computerized printouts. And no one seems to know how frequently school authorities should grade and report on students. Continually, constantly, as needed, every six weeks, every nine weeks, four times a year, three times a year – all were among responses received in the study conducted by the researchers and authors of this report.

School Systems Grapple with the Report Card

The diversity in grading and reporting plans grows out of the diversity of the nation's school districts. Each school system approaches the challenge of revision and improvement in its own way. Here are glimpses of how a number of school districts have come to grips with the problem, or part of the problem, in recent months:

Cashmere, Wash. A card, introduced in 1970 for

elementary school children from kindergarten up to the first year of junior high school, grades effort only. As long as an elementary student tries his best, he receives a top mark. Thus, all academic areas (reading, spelling, math, etc.) are graded with an O – indicating outstanding effort in relation to ability; or an S – indicating satisfactory effort in relation to ability; or an N – nonsatisfactory effort in relation to ability. Actual academic levels of achievement are discussed during the parent-teacher conference. This type of reporting system places emphasis not only on the parent-teacher conference, but on frequent conferences between student and teacher.

Fullerton, Calif. The reporting system for elementary students has gone through a grade-level by grade-level revision beginning in 1968-69 school year. It is now nearing completion with the computerization of seventh- and eighth-grade report forms.

The traditional report card was a four-quarter, letter-grade instrument. The new reporting system includes, among other features, an introductory letter to parents, giving them a choice between a letter-grade and a nonletter-grade report; a questionnaire seeking more information about the student and his learning behavior as observed at home; a teacher-written evaluation; and a year-end progress report. A report card and conference committee is continually evaluating marking and reporting changes.

Inglewood, Calif. As in neighboring Fullerton, parents whose children attend the Frank O. Parent Elementary School have a choice between a traditional graded card and a narrative report. In one recent year, three-fourths of the parents chose the narrative form. This school uses a student self-evaluation report for grades 1-6, in which the youngster, as well as the teacher, has an opportunity to indicate his impressions of how well he is doing and where he needs to improve. The student's evaluation form goes home with the teacher's narrative statement. The parent is asked to respond by filling out a one-page form and returning it to the teacher. The option for a teacher-parent conference is always kept open.

Minneapolis, Minn. This large school system lives up to its school board policy on reporting, which reads in part: "The board wishes the professional staff of our schools to devise and maintain as many ways of reporting to parents their children's progress as needed to convey to each parent a comprehensive educational appraisal of each pupil in light of school goals." Some schools in the district use traditional forms of grading; others are experimenting with a variety of innovative schemes. Observers recently discovered that some 30 different alpha-numerical characters or combinations of characters are in use – A+, D–, N (no credit), S and U among them. The most discernible effort is to make more use of written progress reports from teacher to parent. During 1970-71, a committee of teachers developed a new essay-type report to parents with a minimum of structure. This was being tried out in eight schools.

Janesville, Wis. Citizenship gets more than routine evaluation in the reporting instruments devised for this school district. Student progress reports used in elementary schools include eight items assessing citizenship; for example: "Copes with problems," "Practices respect for others." So that teacher, parent and student will have a clearer idea of what the phrases mean, each one is elaborated in a letter going to the home. Thus, "Shows desire to learn" is explained as follows: "If you do or do not succeed in the learning-teaching process, you try, try and try again and again. . . . You demonstrate the spirit of inquiry."

For secondary schools, Janesville uses a special citizenship report card which records the teacher's assessment on six attributes: "Completes work on time," "Obeys rules," "Practices respect for others," "Copes with problems," "Displays respect for authority," "Shows desire to learn." Again each of the phrases is elaborated in definitions printed on the back of the card.

Ferguson, Mo. The Ferguson-Florissant School District has moved from using report cards which list broad categories of learning – reading, writing, spelling, math – to those which list specific behaviors in each of the subject areas, such as: "Names and knows the values of coins," "Uses correct punctuation." Another shift is away from comparing students with others in a grade or age level and toward evaluating the individual in terms of his own growth. At one high school, the administration has introduced an experimental Pass/Fail approach for seniors in subjects not required for graduation, if the parent gives permission. Before continuation, the plan will be evaluated by a team of students, teachers and parents.

Iowa City, Iowa. The secondary schools are making increasing use of the Credit/No Credit grading system. The system began in 1968-69 as a

Involving Learners in Evaluation

"A report card of the children, by the children and for the children" is reported by the Oak View Elementary School in Fairfax, Va. In describing the evaluation method used in their school, Dorothy B. Collier, principal, and Judith A. Caldwell, assistant principal, said that "it removes the mystery" that usually surrounds the traditional report card.

At Oak View, the two administrators declare, the student does not worry about "passing or failing, getting an A or an F," because he is engaged in finding out how he can improve his work or how to do better on the next unit of study.

Here, in brief, is the Oak View story:

Oak View is organized for team teaching, within a non-graded structure. Objectives for a given unit of study are decided jointly by teachers and students. The children also help plan their learning experiences, and subsequently evaluate the extent to which they've mastered the concepts of learning units, or their advancement toward subject matter goals.

At the completion of each unit of study, the accomplishments (called "concepts" in that school) are listed as they are identified and stated by the children. Lists of these accomplishments are reviewed by teachers and principal, then typed in duplicate by the office staff and returned to each class. One copy of the list of "concepts" goes to the teacher; and another copy goes to each student. Each child marks his copy, indicating his evaluation of the progress he has made toward the concept. A copy of this instrument eventually reaches the home and one is also filed in the child's record folder in school. At almost any stage during the creation of these report forms, conferences between student and teacher and teacher and parent may take place.

pilot project in one course – typing. In 1969-70, it was extended to home economics. In 1970-71, the practice spread to industrial arts, art, general music, speech, physical education, vocal music and instrumental music. In academic subjects, such as language, science and math, A-B-Cs continue to be used.

Houston, Tex. The Houston Independent School District sent Spanish-speaking parents with children in Edison Junior High School a bulletin on the school's continuous progress, no-fail educational program which contained the following paragraph:

> **El Plan**
>
> En Agosto 1971, los maestros y administracion de la escuela Edison Junior High tendra la inauguracion de un programa educacional de progreso continuo sin reprobar para todod los alumnos del septimo grado esta comunidad. Llamado el "Programa Instruccional Multigrupo Singrado," la neuva forma sera extendida al grado octavo en Agosto del 1972, y al noveno en 1973. Despues de este tiempo ya no seran usados los nombres de nivel de grado.

Evanston, Ill. Consolidated School District No. 65 seeks to make real the principle that pupil progress reports should be sent to parents not only at the end of a nine- or six-week period, but at any time the student, parent or teacher may benefit. Technology helps. In addition to face-to-face conferences, and a variety of report forms, District No. 65 uses mark-sense cards – instruments which are part of sophisticated data processing and reporting machinery. This technology permits teachers to send to parents frequent statements about students. Even though the statements come from a data bank catalogue of items on attitude, behavior and academic skills, it is still possible, officials believe, to transmit to the parents "personalized and warm letters" about an individual pupil's progress in school.

Dover, Del. When schools offer special teaching programs, report cards reflect them by means of newly devised measuring scales. Children in the Capital School District are taught beginning reading by the Initial Teaching Alphabet (i/t/a) approach. The report card contains a scale to indicate how well the child reads with the help of i/t/a by listing the books which the child has mastered, from Dinosaur Ben (a relatively easy i/t/a book) to Mr. Pickle's Surprise (relatively difficult for a first grader).

Jericho, N.Y. Faculty and administrators have been at work since 1968 in search of new grading and reporting plans. For elementary schools, new procedures went into effect in 1970. The progress report forms for grades 1-6 list skills, attitudes and habits the schools are trying to develop. The teacher marks the child simply on whether he already possesses the skill, is making progress toward achieving it, or does not possess the skill at this time. For grades seven and eight, a faculty group has recommended a reporting procedure based on the student's achievement of specific behavioral goals. It is scheduled to go into effect during the 1971-72 school year. Report cards for grades 9-12 have been modified slightly – passing grades are recorded numerically, but a failing numerical grade is replaced with an F. (The value of the F will not be averaged as part of the final mark and teachers have discretion in evaluating the total growth of a student during the year.) A high school faculty committee is at work on a marking and reporting system that will satisfy the colleges and at the same time provide more information for parents and students.

Huntington, N.Y. Reforms in reporting are frequently made under the spur of efforts to individualize teaching and learning. Such is the case in the Union Free School District No. 1, comprising the Elwood Public Schools. Parents of kindergarten children now have the opportunity to discuss with teachers some 73 separate items of progress in six major areas (social development, physical and motor development, work habits, etc.). A recently revised reporting system for intermediate grades provides parents with 66 criteria in 13 major areas for assessing their children's activities in school. Elwood educators believe that involvement in individualized instruction of students makes the use of flat grades or symbols, such as Outstanding, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory, completely untenable.

The brief sketches above should not leave the impression that these activites, as noted, constitute the entire effort of reforming grading and reporting procedures in these school systems. A first effort to change often leads to further experimentation. The process, in the school systems cited above, as well as for most other systems, is continuous, and may remain unfinished business for some time to come – as the report from one county, given in the next chapter, indicates.

Chapter 2

Venturing Toward Change: An Unfinished Story

Scratch the report card, and you'll find behind its surface the history of American education, its accumulated traditions, the convictions of its past.

Those who would venture to change the report card must, therefore, dare to reconsider educational philosophy and their notions of how children grow or fail to grow in intellectual power and in character. They must be ready to revise their school board policy, teaching methods, relations with students and relations with parents and the community.

You can't revise the report card by committing it to the computer, by changing the paper it's printed on or by appointing a committee to look for a ready-made model. Significant changes in marking and reporting, the experience of school systems show, can come only after a reconstruction, or, at least a vigorous shake-up of educational thinking and educational practice.

The experiences of the Montgomery County (Md.) Public Schools are a case in point.

A Long, Long Effort

After three years of nonstop efforts to revise their grading and reporting procedures, educators in Montgomery County, Md., began to get a glimpse of the answer to their problems. The answer, they found, goes far beyond changing symbols on a report card. It involves an almost total reorganization of the curriculum itself.

The effort began in January 1969 when Supt. Homer O. Elseroad appointed a committee to study grading and reporting practices. No single incident provoked this action, but there had been sufficient agitation among students, parents, community groups and staff to warrant a study that would seek and, if possible, provide answers to the questions: Is grading necessary in the first place? Is the present system adequate? And if not, what changes should be made?

The membership of the committee represented many points of view. As finally organized, it included five students, six parents, six teachers, six principals and four central office professionals.

They embarked on the first of 17 months of weekly meetings with as wide a divergence of ideas as the superintendent could have hoped for. The recollection today is that all members sat down entirely convinced that their own point of view was the right one. By the time the final report was written in May 1970 not one member had held to his original stand.

But at the start of the work, a number of common assumptions could be identified.

First, no one wanted to abandon all forms of evaluation and reporting altogether, and all members saw some instances where grading and reporting procedures were useful. There was consensus on a statement then in effect in Montgomery County (dated 1967) that the primary purpose of grading was to benefit students and that grades should mean something to parents.

There was also the common assumption that the system of grading and reporting then used in the county (the traditional A-B-C) was neither objective nor fairly and uniformly administered, and that the definitions of letter grades would need to be substantially revised if they were to tell students what they would have to do to improve performance.

Grades should evaluate performance, not people, most of the committee members agreed. Thus, they objected at the outset to the word "grade" itself because it connoted a fixed state of endowment or capacity, like Grade A eggs or choice grade beef. Rather, they preferred "evaluation," which connotes what a person does rather than what he is, and which is applied at one time and to one set

of criteria and can change depending on need or will or opportunity. Later the committee was to write in its report, "The distinction may seem pedantic to some, but it reflects the committee's concern that evaluating and reporting practices should serve to open doors for students, not close them."

But despite these basic points of agreement, the committee became enmeshed in extensive controversy:

There were, for example, long debates about what factor had the most influence on grades. Was it chiefly the student, the teacher, the curriculum or the tests? The parents and students claimed that a student's performance depended upon his teacher's performance. But the teachers and principals pointed out that the strength and appropriateness of the curriculum and the tests could be just as influential in determining a grade.

Although committee members tried to treat each of these variables separately, they found them inextricably related. Because of the differences in students' mental, emotional and cultural development, it could not be said that a teacher had done a good or a bad job simply on the basis of the students' grades. Further, if the tests were not constructed to match the course objectives and the material covered in the classroom, even able students would do poorly. Finally, pupils with remediable learning handicaps might be making remarkable progress under skilled teachers in special programs, yet they would receive poor grades if they were measured by standardized tests against norms established by the general school population.

Opinions, Questions—And One Answer

Aware of these basic agreements and disagreements, the committee set out to explore what was becoming a more and more complex question. The idea was to gather as much information from as many sources as possible before the next school year began so that recommendations could be made and field-tested in selected schools. The committee would then evaluate the field tests, analyze a parent-student survey to be conducted by the system's research department in the fall, and then issue a final report in the spring of 1970.

One of the first committee decisions was to gather opinions from the community at large: parents, students and staff. A public hearing was scheduled at one of the senior high schools, and its purpose was widely publicized through student organizations, civic groups and PTA s.

A few minutes before the meeting was to begin, the chairman was tipped off that a group of students was planning "a demonstration." Only a few of the committee members were aware of the warning. The chairman decided to ignore advice to take special precautions and, as he put it, "held my breath and went on with it."

As the meeting began, a band of high school youngsters walked in the back door of the auditorium, a number of them carrying paper bags. One of them, it turned out, was scheduled to address the committee. When he was called, he walked up to the table, carrying his paper bag, placed it in front of him, and began to plead for a drastic change in the grading system.

As he reached his climax, he emptied the contents of the bag on the table. "With your grading system," he said as he poised one hand over a pile of tomatoes, some green and some overripe, "you have squashed our initiative and killed our spirit!" Down came his hand, palm open, spattering fragments of tomato all around him. That was the extent of the demonstration, and the committee conceded that it was a telling one.

In all, 33 individuals or groups presented their views, which ranged from one extreme to the other. This testimony, plus letters from individuals or groups representing parents, school staff members and students, gave the committee something to chew on as they returned to their deliberations. All subsequent meetings were open, and many people took up the committee's invitation to attend and to contribute to the discussions.

Five Basic Recommendations

In September 1969 the committee issued a progress report. It discussed different philosophies of evaluation, pointed to the disagreements that the committee had so far been unable to resolve and finally offered recommendations "for implementation and/or high priority development in the fall of 1969." These recommendations still stand as the criteria toward which a new marking procedure should aim. They include, among others, the following:

Making of School Board Policies

A board of education has an obligation to state its philosophy on grading and reporting; and a duty to request from the administration the rules and regulations which are to implement that philosophy.

But, concretely, what kind of policy can a board of education fashion on so volatile a subject as report cards — or grading and reporting in general?

A review of a large sample of policy statements from boards immediately reveals a wide range of expressions — from the very general to specific prescriptions of the mechanics.

Some boards are content with such broad statements as the following:

- The board requires through appropriate reporting methods that all parents be informed of the progress of their children and directs the superintendent to establish the means through which this is accomplished.

- There is no one prescribed way for reporting to parents. Parents have the right to all usable information that the school has about their children, and the school has an obligation to communicate this information to the parents in an understandable and professional way.

For most school boards, such statements are not enough. Some see to it that their policies protect the traditional report card, with its A, B, C grading; others encourage experimentation with new forms of reporting, but insist that any major innovations must be cleared and approved by board action.

However, there are a number of choices which a school board might well consider and adopt or reject in hammering out a broad statement of policy. Among policy elements to consider are:

Frequency of reporting: Is the board willing to leave this to the administration? How many times a year should formal reports go to parents? Should the frequency be different for different levels of grades?

Parent-teacher conferences: Does the board wish to encourage such conferences? For what levels or grades? Is the board prepared to back parent-teacher conferences with in-service orientation, with provision for adequate time the faculty will require for conducting organized and regularly scheduled conferences?

Pass/Fail: Is the board willing to approve the practice? On a pilot basis? For specific courses? For which grades?

Studies and experiments: Is the board willing to initiate ventures toward new ways to grade and report? What limits and controls does the board want to place on such experimentation?

Advice from specialists on policy formulation may be summed up as follows: No board should formulate or revise policy on grading and reporting without long and extensive consultation with staff, teachers, parents and pupils. Policy statements should not be considered final and permanent. Review, revision and reconstruction of policy on a periodic schedule (ranging from yearly to every three to five years), may be a useful guideline for boards of education.

1. Every student in every classroom should know what will be expected of him, learning activity by learning activity or unit by unit, before his instruction begins. This means that each child should know the general objectives as well as the specific criteria each step along the way. If a teacher is unable to define these objectives in behavioral terms, all the resources of the school and central office should be directed to help him. This would also require the development of coordinated teacher guides and evaluative procedures by the central staff.

2. Every student in every classroom should know *how he is doing,* learning activity by learning activity or unit by unit, during, as well as after, the course of his instruction. If he is not doing as well as his tested aptitude says he should, prompt attention should be given to the student-teacher relationship, to the appropriateness of the program and tests. If there are problems in these areas, they should be attacked without delay.

3. The administration should encourage innovations in evaluation and reporting practices, as long as these changes are clearly stated and understood and well thought out, and as long as the faculties want to try them and the school communities are willing to accept them.

4. Keeping in mind the criteria in number 3, all elementary schools should abolish letter grades in grades 1-4 in favor of such means as skills checklists, behavior scales and pupil progress profiles, narrative reports and parent-teacher conferences. The school should have the option of abolishing letter grades in the fifth and sixth grades. (Note: The committee split 20-5 on making the abolition of letter grades mandatory in grades 1-4; the vote on grades 5-6 was 13-9 in favor of local option, with three voting for no change at all.)

5. Secondary schools should, at their own option, initiate pass fail systems for all courses in which credits are not required by state law for graduation.

In addition, the committee urged that all examinations and quizzes be marked as soon as feasible and reviewed with the class before the next test is administered; that all teachers and administrators at secondary levels give more emphasis to comprehensive evaluative dialogues between individual students and teachers; and that the entire professional staff support inservice workshops on grading and marking, work to improve school-community communications on reporting policies and practices, and involve students in the development of new practices and procedures.

Finally, the committee urged the school system to design mutually acceptable procedures of appeal for solving student-teacher-parent controversies about evaluation practices.

The report was reprinted (eight pages, newsletter format) and distributed among student, parent, community and staff groups, with requests for reactions and suggestions. Several reprints through the year brought the number of copies distributed to about 50,000. Members of the committee served as speakers or panelists at scores of public meetings, "often gaining as much information as they imparted," the speakers reported.

What People Think

The next step was to survey current practices and student-parent-teacher opinion to identify areas of agreement and controversy. This study, administered by the school system's department of research in November 1969, covered 2,366 parents of children in grades 2-12; 5,785 students in grades 7-12; and 838 members of the professional staff. The computerized data and analysis were published as a special report. Here are some examples of what the study revealed about current practices and student and parent opinion:

- As for current practices, 76% of the students said they had received letter grades in all their subjects on their most recent report card, while 5% of the junior high students and 21% of those in senior high school had received pass/fail grades in some subjects.

  Fifty-nine percent of the students said they had had no teacher conferences at all. Oddly, almost twice as many elementary teachers (47%) said they reported to parents through written comments in at least some subjects as parents (27%) reported receiving such comments; four times as many elementary teachers (42%) reported holding parent-teacher conferences as parents (10%) reported having them.

- The students were asked what kinds of reporting systems they would prefer. About 62% of the junior high school students preferred letter grades, with 10% favoring each of three other choices: numerical; pass/fail; or outstanding, satisfactory, unsatisfactory. The senior high school students, however, preferred letter grades by only 34%, to 22% for pass/fail, 13% for numerical and 10% for O-S-U. The interesting thing here is that parents did not reflect children's shift of preference upon reaching high school level. Parents of students at both levels held steady at about 53% for letter grades, as against 17% for numerical and less than 5% for pass/fail.

- Asked to describe how much their school's reporting system told them about their progress, 69% of the junior high students checked, "All or most of what I want to know," while 30% checked, "Not as much or hardly anything I want to know." The parents were less satisfied, splitting about 50-50 between those two choices. The senior high school students were less satisfied – 55% checked the negative answer. And 67% of the high school teachers felt that the present grading system did not convey enough information to student and parent.

- About half of the senior high school students said they would work just as hard in school if grades were eliminated. However, 68% said that under the present system they work hard because they want good grades. Only about half as many of their parents thought children would work as hard without grades, and only one-fourth as many teachers thought so.

Innovation Has Its Own Momentum

The committee frequently debated the extent to which the survey should influence its decisions. In its report the committee noted: "County opinion has political as well as educational significance, but we feel strongly that the school system cannot abrogate its responsibilities for educational leadership because of fear of anticipated controversy."

The committee went back to its deliberations, aiming toward a final report the following spring. But meanwhile, action was taking place on several other fronts within the school system.

First, a number of pilot schools, working with the staff of the department of pupil and program appraisal (whose director was nonvoting executive secretary of the committee) began to experiment with new types of reporting practices. These efforts involved members of the faculty, students and parents – individually and in group meetings.

Second, a group of the system's curriculum experts (led by a mathematics supervisor who was a member of the committee) attacked what turned out to be the pivotal problem: If an evaluation system were to be based on a step-by-step process of setting and attaining objectives, it would be worthless unless each teacher knew what the objectives were; to evaluate pupils on their progress toward those objectives, the teacher must be able to set down tasks in an ascending level of difficulty, to culminate in mastery of the specific skill. Then the teacher would know where the student was on each ladder each step of the way – and so would the student and parent. The curriculum, therefore, had to be restructured or, at the very least, rearticulated. That effort was begun in two priority areas, reading and mathematics.

Meanwhile, the faculties of the pilot schools began developing behavioral charts, and with the help of the central office, devised their own report cards. The most striking of these, put together by the faculty of the new Tilden Junior High School, was a four-part carbonless form that measured 8½ by 14 inches and included boxes for 185 to 250 separate checkmarks. One semester of English, for example, was broken down into 22 units for purposes of measurement and evaluation.

The symbols to be used, instead of the traditional A, B, C, were "Presented," indicating that the material was presented to the student, and "Mastered," meaning that he had mastered the material presented. The behavioral objectives for each unit, showing what constitutes mastery, were listed in an instructional guide included in each student's notebook. Parent conferences were used extensively.

This type of reporting form, now retitled "Pupil Appraisal Record," obviously placed a burden on the teachers, but they felt it was worth it. Therefore, after revising the form somewhat, the school put it into use again for the 1970-71 school year. The revision simply made the evaluation code more specific. Instead of indicating only whether the student had mastered the unit or not, the school devised a code made up of P, 1, 2, 3. The P

meant that the material had been presented but not completed because of circumstances other than lack of student effort; 1 meant that the student was unable to master the basic objectives (this mark required the teacher to send home a supplementary form explaining it); 2 meant the student had completed the basic objectives; and 3 indicated that the student had completed all the objectives "at the expected level of performance."

Still Another Attempt

Once again the Tilden school form was well received by parents, but they voiced one objection. "We like this," the reaction went, "and we know more than ever before, but what will Harvard say about P, 1, 2, 3? We'd sure like to see A-B-C's, too." So Tilden went back to the drawing board and devised still another evaluation code for 1971-72. Here's what that is like:

A – The student has attained all the objectives of the unit. This performance indicated a high likelihood of success in subsequent units of instruction in the subject.

B – The student has attained the basic as well as most of the higher objectives of the unit. This performance indicated a good likelihood of success in subsequent units of instruction in the subject.

C – The student has attained the basic objectives of the unit. This performance indicated a reasonable likelihood of success in subsequent units of instruction in the subject.

N – The student has not attained the basic objectives of the unit. Factors which may have contributed to this inability to master the unit are indicated on the accompanying checklist.

Under this plan no student was labeled a "failure" with a traditional E or F, yet the parents and students could spot learning difficulties. As the committee chairman explained later, "No child should ever be considered a failure. He must have learned something and, given time, everyone will succeed, even if it requires special training and special schools."

By the time the 1971-72 school year rolled around, about half of the county's 195 schools were using their own reporting system, due to the encouragement of the administration and the board of education, as recommended by the committee. Reporting plans ranged from one extreme to the other in complexity, but all were geared to behavioral objectives and all placed emphasis on parent conferences.

It was a noble experiment, but preparing and distributing hundreds of pages of reporting forms and keeping track of the reactions burdened the staff to the point where some consolidation seemed called for. The superintendent set up a staff task force to survey what had been done and to come up with a coordinated procedure and standardized form for the board of education to adopt.

This was finished toward the middle of the 1971-72 school year, and took the form of an 11-page proposed procedure and six proposed report cards. In contrast to the Tilden school effort, the proposed forms seem, at first, like a return to the past.

Kindergarten children would be rated with either a check or an X, indicating whether or not they had made progress. At least two parent conferences would be required during the school year.

In grades 1 and 2, the report form would use the symbols O, S and U, for outstanding, satisfactory, and needs improvement, with extensive use of parent-teacher conferences.

It is in grades 3, 4 and 5 that the traditional letter grades return, but with a twist. The symbols A, B, C, D and E would be used to denote the attainment of the objectives assigned to each student. In other words, if the student completed the tasks assigned to him by the teacher in the prescribed time, he would get a high mark, even if he were not working at as advanced a level as his classmates. This reflected a strong feeling on the part of the superintendent, who told the board, "I can't see why a child with a below-average IQ who works hard to complete the tasks assigned him should be doomed to a career of D's and E's if he does not do what is expected of him. I also can't see why we should reward a child with an above-average IQ with A's if he loafs half the time." This report form, then, would grade the child on how he performs on his individually assigned tasks. To help the parent understand the

situation, an extra box was added in the basic subjects of reading and mathematics to show whether the child was performing below, at, or above grade level. Thus, the hard-working low-IQ child could get an A/3, meaning that he was attaining the objectives assigned him, but that those objectives were below grade level.

The statement on procedure also stressed that the student's attention in class, his getting work in on time, and other study habits were to be evaluated separately from the objectives of the subject in an O-S-U format, and would have no bearing on the grade for subject matter. In addition, the procedure dispensed with the idea of a grading curve. The authors of the new procedures point out that the goal is to have as many students as possible attain a large number of objectives. "When relatively large numbers of low ratings are appropriate," they said, "the instructional program should be reexamined to find ways of improving the learning experience. . . ."

For secondary schools, a similar A-E system was proposed. In grades 7 and 8, these letter grades would be used for all subjects. In grades 9-12, they would be used for all courses required for graduation, but with parental permission a student might register for elective courses on a pass/fail basis, limited to one course in grade 9 and three in grade 12.

The proposed procedure also urged adoption of two of the original study committee's recommendations, now reworded:

> Every student should be informed about his progress, learning activity by learning activity, or unit by unit, during as well as upon completion of the course of his instruction.
>
> All examinations and quizzes will be evaluated and returned as soon as feasible and reviewed with the class before the next test is administered. Essays, papers and long-term projects will be evaluated, returned and reviewed with the student before the administration of a test that will cover the subject of that assignment.

Reaction of the Board of Education

There were enough new ideas in this plan to give the Montgomery County board members a pause. Although they had consistently voiced approval of a change in grading policies, some members were troubled by such prospects as giving a low-IQ child an A and a genius in the same class a C. Others wanted to know more about the specific objectives and tasks in the curriculum. One, for example, singled out an entry in the "Reading Readiness" section of the kindergarten form in which the teacher is to mark a check for progress next to "Knows birthday." "Either the child knows it or he doesn't," the member said. "I don't see how you can evaluate progress in that one."

Rather than act immediately, the board decided to ask the staff and parents to study the plan and submit their reactions. Principals were instructed to ask faculty members to review the procedures and offer comments. Copies of the plans were widely circulated throughout the county, and publicity about the proposed changes stimulated public discussion.

That is as far as Montgomery County is at this writing, but during 1972 the board of education is scheduled to take up the question again and to adopt a formal policy. Whatever its details, the

A Short, Short Story

In the secondary schools, beginning with the 7th grade, we use the old fashioned report card that is based on a percentage basis. In one of our junior high schools, we tried a year or two ago, a system of no formal reports. There was a public outcry about this. The principal is no longer with us.

— Excerpt from a letter received by the compilers of this report.

policy is bound to reflect the research, experimentation, public reaction and discussion that has taken place during the past three years. The board will probably balance the push for innovation with practical problems of administration. This means that while the board may not give individual schools carte blanche in adopting unique systems, it will leave the door open to alternatives developed by schools if they meet the basic criteria of the board policy and if they grow out of strong faculty and community involvement.

One of the concepts the board will be considering soon is being developed by a group of curriculum specialists. They are preparing what they call a continuum for the basic subjects, starting with mathematics and reading. This is turning out to be a complex job, but one the staff feels is vital for the success of a reporting system based on the attainment of objectives.

For example, the math continuum may list as one of the skills to be mastered by the pupil subtracting a two-place number such as 19 from a two-place number such as 38. This will require regrouping one ten to ones (38–19).

A continuum of skills leads up to this skill. To mention some of them: skill in subtraction of a one-place whole number from another one-place whole number, and all one-place whole numbers from 10; skill in subtracting a one-place number from a two-place number without regrouping (68–3); skill in subtracting a two-place number from a two-place number without regrouping (68–24); and skill in regrouping – that is in renaming a number such as 38 from 3 tens and 8 ones, as it stands, to two tens and 18 ones, the necessary operation preceding subtraction of 19 from 38.

An illustration of the reading continuum would be the mastery of the BL blend in the initial position of a word. This is divided into four levels, starting with visual identification (can the child match a BL word in one column with one in another column?); then aural identification (can he circle a BL word in a list when the teacher pronounces it?); then reproduction (when the teacher dictates the word, can he reproduce it orally or in writing?); and finally application (will the child recognize important words beginning with BL in a story he is reading?).

The idea of such a checklist is to pinpoint those skills a child has attained or lacks. The traditional approach to grading tells generally how well a child is doing – what subjects he is succeeding in (A), in what ones he is failing (E). But it tells nothing about what he has achieved and what he needs to do. It doesn't tell the child or the parent at what point a deficiency began or what he has succeeded in learning. The checklist scheme informs the child where he is and how well he is doing, and even though he may be low on the ladder in relation to his classmates, he is getting somewhere. If all such a child can look forward to is an E anyway, he easily gives up with the attitude, "Why work hard for an E when you can get one without trying?" Using a checklist of objectives, the teacher can show him that he is achieving something.

After more than three years of concentrated effort to revise grading and reporting procedures, Montgomery County is still in the midst of the task. The leaders, however, feel they have learned many lessons, and cite these two as the most important:

1. Give everyone in the school district the opportunity to live through and work through the process of changing the reporting system. Adopting anybody else's ready-made model is worthless. Staff and parents must thoroughly understand the purposes of evaluation and have touched all the bases.

2. Go to the community with your ideas. Many people will oppose change at first, so you must make the community part of the decision-making process. Use PTA study committees and community meetings and carry on dialogues with students long before you anticipate introducing any changes.

By following these basic guidelines, Montgomery County has earned a highly favorable public response to all of its experimental efforts to devise new ways to grade students and to report results to parents. Given more time, more trials, more freedom to test ideas, Montgomery County may yet reach its goal of making the report card an integral part of instruction.

Chapter 3

Choices and Alternatives

New practices in grading and reporting come chiefly as a result of new concepts about teaching and learning, and about the role of parents and the home in educating children. Each innovation seems to highlight the need for further modification in grading/reporting systems.

To categorize recently adopted practices reported in the *Education U.S.A.* survey, we present them as "first generation" and "second generation" innovations – both lead away from traditional grades and report cards. The generations are separated by hesitancy toward change and some reversion to traditional systems during the post-Sputnik decade. Some schools which previously adopted some or all of the first set of changes are adopting those of the second set; other schools are still adopting some or all of the first set; and a number are going directly from traditional grading/reporting to the second-generation systems.

First Generation Innovations

Among the problems that brought – and in many schools are still bringing – the first wave of changes in grading and reporting procedures are the following:

- How can either one numerical or letter grade per subject area give parents (or the student or his future teachers) the information they need about the student's achievements and difficulties in school?
- How can the negative aspects of grades be reduced so that less able pupils will not be discouraged from trying?
- How can grades reflect the student's individual progress (which the student, his parents and his future teachers need to know) as well as his level of accomplishment in relation to others (which the student, his parents and his future teachers also need to know)?

Schools seeking answers to these problems have been turning to a combination of the following approaches and infinite variations:

- Parent-teacher conferences used to supplement or replace written reports.
- Check lists detailing the pupil's achievements and problems in different subject areas, as well as in attitudes and work habits.
- Rating scales using numbers, letters or symbols other than percentages or an A-F system.
- Positive evaluations used to report what the student has achieved, rather than what he has not achieved thus eliminating the "failure" categories.
- Dual grades and ratings which may disclose both the student's achievement in relation to his ability and in relation to the class.
- Narrative reports written or composed by the teacher for each student.

With the possible exception of dual ratings all of these innovations appear to be more commonly used at elementary levels than at secondary levels.

Parent Conferences—The 'Ideal'

Conferences with parents head the list of first generation innovations. Although parent confer-

ences have been common in the primary grades for years, superintendents and elementary principals replying to the survey invariably emphasized their growing importance at all elementary levels: "The basis of our reporting system is the parent-teacher conference," or "We are now adding parent conferences at middle-grade and junior high levels."

Rarely do conferences with parents replace all written reports; when this does occur, it is only at the kindergarten or the first-grade level. At other levels, conferences and written reports usually are alternated, or the conference supplements the written report. In some systems, the teacher prepares a written report on a school-devised form to guide discussion, and then presents it to the parent during the conference along with samples of the pupil's work.

Conference report forms may be simple, or they may be highly structured check lists designed to dovetail with the written report forms used. The child's progress in each area may or may not be rated according to some specific scale and the ratings reported to parents at the conference.

Even when no formal check lists are provided, most faculty handbooks give detailed suggestions for conducting parent conferences. The teacher may be urged by the school administration to keep anecdotal records and samples of children's work to draw upon in discussing progress. Both the samples and the anecdotal records (written reports of actual events in the student's life as observed by the teacher) enable the teacher to bring concrete examples of the child's behavior, learning prowess and learning problems to the parents' attention.

Although one goal of the conference is to set up a two-way communication between the school and home, many parents attend expecting to listen, and most teachers schedule them, expecting to talk. Some schools are trying to counter this situation by asking the parent to fill out a report in which he evaluates the child's activities at home in relation to certain activities which the child engages in at school. Other schools provide teachers with a list of questions to be asked parents during each conference.

The time required for conferences, and the difficulties in scheduling them, appear to limit them to elementary schools where, given a day specifically for conferences at the end of each reporting period, a teacher can conceivably work in most of those required for a class of 25 pupils. At secondary levels, where a teacher may have 100 or 150 students, regular reporting through conferences seems unfeasible. "Even so, conferences remain the ideal method of reporting," say many educators.

Checklists in Abundance

The school system that wishes to provide parents with more details on student progress usually turns to the use of check lists which break down attitudes and work habits into specifics and subjects into various components. Check lists have become more and more detailed – and the trend continues in that direction.

The first check lists included a number of character traits and study habits upon which students were checked or rated. Today almost all reporting instruments at both elementary and secondary levels offer such lists. The following are typical:

Elementary Level

Social and Emotional Development

Is courteous, kind, cooperative
Respects rights of others
Gets along well with others
Respects authority
Shows self-control
Takes care of materials

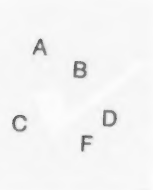
Work Habits and Attitudes

Takes pride in work
Uses school time wisely
Follows directions carefully
Completes work on time
Thinks for himself
Is attentive in class

Secondary Level

Personal Development and Work Habits

Shows evidence of adequate daily preparation
Is usually attentive
Follows directions
Works carefully and thoughtfully
Uses time effectively



Black Parents . . . Report Cards . . . Teacher Conferences

Communication between school and home is necessary for any district, but particularly so for the troubled schools of our urban ghettos. But – like the old singing telegram – the report card is a middle-class communication. Many urban parents don't get, understand or return the message. Nor has the parent-teacher conference met with much success. "Parents will not want to come to a teacher conference if they view it as a condescending lecture by a stranger from another culture," says Donald R. McNeely, a human-relations specialist with the New Jersey Education Assn.

At the core of the problem is the widespread feeling among many urban blacks that they are a group victimized by national neglect. Some view the schools as a symbol of this neglect. One remedy for this situation is to get them involved in the education of their children.

The key is greater involvement of school personnel with the community, says McNeely. Before the urban black is likely to attend a parent-teacher conference, he must trust school personnel. School districts which increase the number of black teachers and administrators in the system may help to build trust in the community – but not necessarily. "Black educators have a foot in the door," McNeely states, "but the condition of being black, alone, doesn't make them part of the community."

What the urban school needs, McNeely says, is a staff which takes an interest in the people and the activities of the community. "If the teacher or principal gets into his car and drives away when the school day ends, he is not likely to build rapport with the community, no matter what his color. But when a teacher walks the kids home and initiates contact with the neighborhood, then the community knows he takes an interest in the people."

Real community involvement also means parent participation in identifying problems, assessing needs, and having a say in solutions and new programs involving the school, McNeely says.

Where the school staff has been willing and able to stimulate this kind of participation in the community, report cards draw responses from the home and conferences are attended.

Shows consideration for other people
Is cooperative and dependable
Constructively participates in group activities
Profits from constructive criticism
Shows responsibility for self-direction and self-improvement

The earliest type check list covering academic areas – and still the most common – offers two, three, or four subcategories for each subject. For example:

Reading (Grade 1)

Reads with understanding
Uses word-attack skills
Masters reading vocabulary
Reads well aloud

English (Grade 8)

Reading
Composition skills
Speaking

Mathematics (Grade 1)

Understands concepts
Has mastered number facts
Is accurate in computation
Shows skill in problem-solving

Mathematics (Grade 8)

Understands concepts
Shows skill in operations
Shows (or has) problem-solving ability

Such check lists point to general areas of a pupil's learning achievement or problems within each subject, but they don't tell the parent much about what the pupil is actually learning or what his specific problems may be. Note the similarity of the first- and eighth-grade lists for mathematics. Certainly the eighth-grade list would be appropriate at all levels of instruction.

A newer type check list breaks down major categories into large numbers of components. Contrast the following lists for first-grade reading and mathematics with the ones given above:

Reading (Grade 1)

Relates sound to given consonant form
Relates sound to given vowel form
Uses phonetic skills to identify new words
Recalls details in reading
Recalls sequence of events in what he reads
Grasps main idea in reading
Identifies sight vocabulary orally
Responds to punctuation
Uses library

Mathematics (Grade 1)

Can read and write numbers
Understands place value
Understands concepts of addition
Understands concepts of subtraction
Understands basic mathematical vocabulary
Can solve addition problems
Can solve subtraction problems
Applies concepts to word problems
Shows accuracy in daily work
Works with reasonable speed

Some check lists offer more detail on student progress in the particular curriculum through listing the concepts and skills emphasized in each subject area during the particular reporting period, and/or listing the units studies. A few newly devised reporting instruments received in the *Education U.S.A.* survey provided spaces for teachers to fill in such items as "units studied" in longhand.

The items children might be checked on at any given grade level – or in any subject area as they progress through school – are many. Note the displays on pp. 32-35. One provides more than 120 items for measuring the progress of children in kindergarten (pp. 32-33); the other provides more than 100 items for measuring progress in reading (pp. 34-35). No single report form received in the survey offered as many as 100 items for measuring progress in kindergarten, but a listing of 30 to 50 items was not uncommon; no single school set up 100 different items for measuring progress in reading through the elementary grades – yet one school listed under reading on its elementary school forms more than 60 different subcategories.

As check lists become longer and more detailed, schools turn to special report forms for each grade level; then to special forms for each subject area at each grade level; and finally, in some instances, to special forms for each reporting period for each subject area at each grade level. Some parents are now receiving a packet of reports at the end of each reporting period, with a card or sheet for each subject and another for attitudes and work habits (this is a popular trend in middle schools and junior high schools). As a result – and because many of the instruments are in trial use – it is not surprising that many schools have replaced printed forms with mimeographed forms.

Well-designed check lists serve a useful purpose: they are much more informative to parent and student than a single numerical or letter grade per subject area. But some schools list skills and concepts in phraseology that many parents may not understand. Moreover, some check lists appear to have been devised on an offhand and piecemeal basis. Ideally, the lists should cover the progressive stages of learning through which a child passes in the various curriculum areas and reflect what the teacher teaches and evaluates. It is doubtful that many check lists do this. There remain unanswered questions – as well as complaints – about whether, or how, to rate pupils on the various items.

By name, a "check list" provides a space to check a student for satisfactory progress on each item listed, but most check lists are being used in combination with rating scales and symbols. Teachers almost invariably rate character traits, attitudes, and study habits in terms indicative of "outstanding," "satisfactory," and "unsatisfactory." Ratings used with academic check lists are more varied and include the traditional A-B-C ratings. The rarest procedure uses the check list simply to check students for satisfactory accomplishment.

An A Is a V Is a C Is a Circle

Percentage grades fell by the wayside because educators came to recognize the impossibility of assigning quantitative values to qualitative accomplishments. A scale of 100 offered too many possibilities for error, both in mathematics and in judgment. Teachers were happy to settle on an A-B-C scale in which grades did not need to be proved mathematically.

But whether expressed in percentages or letters, grades offer obstacles to learning for some pupils, while offering incentives to learning for others. In an effort to ease the effect of poor grades on the pupils who consistently receive poor ones, many elementary schools use rating scales which have fewer "steps" and express the poor rating euphemistically. The format of the reporting instrument determines whether the rating is a check in an appropriate column or expressed with a symbol.

Relatively few schools offer only two ratings. Those which do may use one of the following sets of terms to indicate "satisfactory" and "unsatisfactory":

G – Good progress
N – Needs to improve

√ – Steady progress
X – Slow progress

M – Meets expectations according to ability
C – Can do better

Used in conjunction with extensive check lists, such two-point ratings scales reveal more to student and parent than one pass/fail marking in a subject area (hence here we are not treating them as pass/fail grading).

Schools offering three ratings may use the following terms and symbols:

E – Excellent progress
A – Adequate progress
N – Needs to improve

S – Satisfactory
I – Improvement shown
N – Improvement needed

☒ – Rapid progress
☑ – Satisfactory progress
☐ – Improving slowly

C – Commendable progress
S – Steady progress
M – Minimal progress

P – Progress compares favorably with ability
I – Improving
C – Capable of doing better

Among the newly developed instruments re-

ceived, four ratings were nearly as common as three. The terms and symbols used included:

○ – Outstanding
□ – Satisfactory
√ – Is showing growth
X – Needs improvement

V – Very Good
S – Satisfactory at grade level
C – Capable of doing better
W – Working up to capacity

V – Very good progress for this child
S – Satisfactory progress for this child
SP – Slow progress for this child
L – Little progress for this child

Few schools, except those using A-B-C grading, used more than four ratings. When five were used, they usually were translated into A-B-C grades in a legend on the reporting instrument – thus they are not considered "innovations."

From information on reporting instruments themselves, it is often not known on what basis – individual progress or progress in relation to others in the class – the pupil is being graded. In some instances a legend on the report form or the rating terms themselves make it quite clear.

Careful Watch on Words

Check lists and rating scales received in the survey were examined as to wording – and those reported as having been "recently revised" were contrasted with earlier models. Without doubt, faculty committees revising grading systems are careful in choosing words which describe a child's attitudes, effort and performance.

The newer lists express traits, characteristics and skills in positive terms. This is true at both elementary and secondary levels.

Frequently Used

Completes work on time
Does homework assignments
Listens attentively

Infrequently Used

Work carelessly done
Unprepared for class activities
Is disrespectful

Items related to academic areas also have a positive ring. Rare is the check list on a first-grade report card which contains such an item as "Moves lips when reading silently" or "Counts on fingers" – both common on early-day check lists. (Of course, the idea that children shouldn't use their fingers as a learning aid has also vanished.)

The terms used to express ratings are selected to commend and encourage learning. Originally "Failure" gave way to "Unsatisfactory." Then – in what appears to be the logical evolution – the latter bowed to "Needs To Improve." On newer forms the lowest rating may be: Minimal progress (in contrast to High or Average) or Slow progress (in contrast to Rapid, Good, and Steady).

In explanatory material sent along with several new reporting instruments in which such terms were used, administrators reported that according to school regulations all work completed by children – including tests, daily assignments, projects – was to be marked by teachers in terms consistent with ratings on report cards. Others reported that teachers had been asked not to use the terms "poor" or "failure" in grading daily work.

Although the term and concept of failure have been abandoned more frequently at elementary than at secondary level, some junior high schools and a few high schools are trying to eliminate it. Rather than giving a grade lower than a D, a junior high school may give an "I" (Incomplete). A high school may give only the grades A through D, the latter being the lowest grade for which the student can receive credit for a course. If the student does not earn at least a D, he receives no credit, but no notation of F or "failure" is entered on his report card or record.

It appears that faculty committees revising report cards are using considerable care in the symbols chosen to indicate ratings. Newer forms may use no letter symbols. Each rating is explained in full at the top of a column, and the column checked. Other committees have turned to graphic symbols, as

□ ⊟ ⧄ ⊠ or, ○ √ X /

so that all the connotative letters from A through F, as well as N, O, P, S, etc., can be avoided. The graphic symbols are explained or given values in explanatory notes on the card.

If Dual Grades Are Good, Are More Better?

Many grading/reporting systems incorporate dual grades or ratings. These come in infinite variety.

There is the achievement/effort combination – common in both elementary and secondary schools. Achievement may be rated A-F, or according to any of the scales mentioned. Effort is usually classified in terms indicative of outstanding, satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

A common type of dual grading, particularly in elementary schools, is one rating to indicate individual progress and another to indicate level of performance. A child of fourth-grade age may receive an A (or an O or a circle) in reading, indicating that his individual progress is outstanding, plus a symbol to indicate that his progress is at "second-grade level." Other reporting instruments are less specific, indicating only that the pupil is working "at grade level," "above grade level," or "below grade level." On the other hand, A-B-C grading may be used to indicate both individual progress and progress according to standards for the grade.

Another type of dual grading – branching into triple grading and more – may be used in connection with check-list type instruments. A child may receive a general rating (as Good, Satisfactory, Needs Improvement) in each major subject. He may receive other ratings (in line with a different, or the same scale) on the subskills listed under each subject. If performance ratings have been on the basis of individual progress, he may also be rated as to whether his progress in the general area is at, below, or above grade level.

One elementary school submitting its report form to the *Education U.S.A.* survey uses a double-barreled dual-rating system. This school has separate report cards for each subject at each grade level, and the forms provide fairly detailed check lists. Each check list item calls for one of three ratings as to progress (Excellent, Satisfactory, Having difficulty), and a subscript (1, 2, 3) to indicate effort (Superior, Average, Little). Additionally, an overall rating (S or U) is given for general performance in the area in accordance with individual ability, and another rating (again S or U) for general performance in accordance with grade standards.

Special mention should be made about dual grading in high school, where grouping classes by ability with special courses for slow learners and for advanced students, play havoc with traditional grading. Is an A earned by a student who puts forth good effort in a slow class the same as an A earned by a student in an advanced class? Many high schools have answered this question through "weighted" grades.

In one variation of this method, all academic courses are in one of two or three "tracks." Although students are graded with traditional A-B-C's or percentage grades according to standards set for the particular course, conversion tables are used to convert the letter or percentage grade to "weighted grade points," the number determined in accordance with the track or difficulty of the course. Thus an A in the top track is worth more in grade points than in the middle track; an A in the middle track is worth more than one in the lower track.

To summarize the usefulness of dual grades and ratings, it might be said that the student, his parents, his future teachers – not to mention college admission officials and his prospective employers – probably learn more about a student's abilities from two or more grades than from one. A parent wants to know how a child is progressing according with his own ability; he wants to know how the child's achievements compare with those of other students; and he wants to know if the child is putting forth effort. Even with check lists, it doesn't appear that one rating offers all this information.

Narrative Reports Take Time

Another method of reporting involves – or approaches – actual correspondence from teacher to parent. Narrative reports are often alternated with parent-teacher conferences, and range from full-fledged personal letters and notes written by the teacher, to report forms which offer a few lines for teacher comments under major headings, to computerized letters typed on district letterhead.

Teacher-written letters are most common in kindergarten. They give the teacher an opportunity

to report in detail the progress and problems of an individual child, tailoring remarks for the particular parent. But writing good letters takes time and skill, so in practice the letters tend to be stereotyped, general and vague. One school administrator summed up the pros and cons of letters with these words: "An essay evaluation of a student's strengths and weaknesses is perhaps the best report on student achievement, but this assumes that the teacher has unlimited time to write the evaluation."

Most schools sending narrative reports provide forms on which teachers write brief comments (three or four lines) under subject area headings. A variety of such forms was received in the survey – all of them had been recently adopted, so this means of reporting may be growing. Usually the stated purpose of the practice is "to enable the teacher to report on progress without labeling children with specific grades or ratings." Often parents were permitted to choose between receiving the new narrative report or the older report card used by the school. Most of the narrative report forms received were "new" – that is, adopted within the past year or two by the school using them.

Unfortunately none of the schools that submitted such forms sent any that had been filled in, so the kinds of comments teachers make was left to the imagination. The main headings on the forms were revealing. One of the more unusual forms (Parkway School District, Chesterfield, Mo.) does not give subject areas as headings, but offers space for comments on:

Commendations –

Level of instruction –

Overall progress –

Concerns and recommendations –

One school system (School District 65, Evanston, Ill.) makes available for teachers data-processing of full-length letters reporting on student progress. The teachers select appropriate comments from a 1000-item bank which includes synonymous words, phrases and sentences so that the letter can be put together without awkwardness and with "warmth, expressiveness and a personal touch," the directions state. After process, the typed letter is signed personally by the teacher. Robert Smith's parents may read in part: (see p. 31.)

The instructions for making use of the computer in preparing narrative reports are necessarily detailed and must be followed carefully or the result will be a hodgepodge of badly linked phrases and sentences. At first glance it appears that the computer may be no great time-saver in writing narrative reports.

Computer and Teacher—as Partners

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Smith:

I am sending you this letter to inform you of the progress of Robert in our school. The following comments relate to attitude and behavior.

Robert —

is developing self-control.
is a responsible member of the class.
displays good citizenship.

The following statements apply to the study habits and skill level of Robert in science.

Robert —

needs to develop a basic science vocabulary.
needs improvement in following safety rules.
shares responsibility in laboratory clean-up.

I would appreciate being able to discuss with you some of the comments stated in this letter. Please call at your earliest convenience. If I am unavailable when you call, please leave your telephone number and I shall return your call as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

_____

If Robert has several teachers, they may send a letter together, with the computer doing everything but selecting the comments.

— Excerpt from letter used in School District 65, Evanston, Ill.

Evaluating the Kindergartner

The items below were selected from a nationwide sampling of report cards and other evaluative instruments used to assess and report on the progress of children in the kindergarten. Some schools use no more than 8 to 10 items on a form; others may use a score or more. The composite list given here shows the wide range of skills, attitudes and achievements that may be evaluated.

General Well Being

Appears to be happy in school
Is rested and alert
Does not tire easily
Shows stamina and energy
Is able to relax during quiet periods

Identity

Recognizes and can print own name
Knows address and telephone number
Can tie shoes
Can put on coat, overshoes, etc., by himself
Takes pride in himself and his accomplishments

Social Maturity

Is friendly with other children
Shares with others and takes turns
Wants only his share of attention
Controls temper
Plays and works well in a group
Respects the rights, property, opinions of others
Expresses ideas and feelings in a small group
Expresses ideas and feelings in a large group
Shows preference for children over adults when both are present
Follows leadership willingly
Shows qualities of leadership

Eye-Hand Coordination

Eye-hand coordination evident
Can manipulate puzzles, blocks, crayons, scissors
Can string beads
Can trace simple shapes
Shows good coordination in turning pages of book
Shows good coordination in using simple hand tools

Perception of Direction

Has awareness of direction — right-left, up-down
Identifies left and right hand
Places objects left to right
Shows consistent handedness in eating, coloring, cutting

Work Habits

Has adequate attention span
Controls body for quiet listening
Listens to and follows instructions
Listens while other speak
Remembers important information
Can work and play well alone
Concentrates on a job
Uses time well
Works carefully and accurately
Shows initiative and imagination
Works out solutions to problems
Accepts and carries out suggestions
Shows positive attitude toward formal lesson
Accepts responsibility
Takes care of books and materials

Language Development

Speaks clearly
Participates in Show and Tell
Voluntarily shares experiences
Speaks in phrases
Speaks in sentences
Uses new words
Has adequate vocabulary to express ideas
Expresses ideas freely
Reports events clearly
Directs speaking to specific points
Makes up stories
Makes up rhymes
Dictates stories to be read
Takes part in dramatic play

Reading Readiness

Listens to stories and poems with interest
Interprets main idea in pictures
Orally labels pictures and objects
Can tell stories from pictures
Enjoys looking at books
Can retell a story in considerable detail
Can relate events in sequence and stay on subject
Understands logical sequence
Can recognize small differences in size and shape
Can identify objects by size and shape
Recognizes likenesses and differences in letters
Is familiar with most letters of alphabet
Can hear likenesses and differences
Can distinguish words that rhyme
Can distinguish words beginning with same sound
Knows left to right progression
Recognizes a small number of printed words

Mathematics

Can count objects to 20 or more
Counts objects with understanding
Can recognize numerals 1 to 10
Can write numerals 1 to 10
Can use mathematical terms, such as more-less, taller-shorter, same size as, more than, fewer than, as many as
Understands one-to-one correspondence
Understands equivalent, nonequivalent
Can group objects in sets of 1 through 10
Knows addition combinations through sums of 5
Knows subtraction combinations through sums of 5
Recognizes and can name (check); circle, square, rectangle, triangle, curve, straight line, side, corner
Understands one more-one less pattern on number line
Names and knows the value of coins: penny, nickel, dime, quarter

Science

Is observant of and curious about the world around him
Participates in group experiments and projects
Helps plan experiments
Knows purposes of calendar, thermometer, clock
Understands how things belong together
Understands how things are different
Can compare and classify objects by shape, size, texture and use
Is interested in and understands simple science concepts

Music

Enjoys listening to music
Participates in singing and music activities
Learns new songs well
Takes part in rhythm activities
Is gaining understanding of melody, rhythm and harmony through (check): Singing, moving to music, playing instruments, use of call and response, use of resonator bells for matching pitches, use of hands to show high and low pitch and melodic contour.

Art

Enjoys arts and crafts
Uses art materials to express own ideas
Expresses ideas using (check): crayons, clay, paint, scissors, paper, cardboard, paste, yarn, string, beads
Recognizes colors by name and use
Handles tools and equipment properly
Beginning to develop symbols for self-expression
Beginning to develop awareness of art in immediate environment

Health, Safety, Physical Education

Practices good health habits
Obeys safety rules
Takes part in activities and games to develop physical skills
Enjoys physical activities
Plays fairly
Follows rules of game
Shows good sportsmanship
Shows motor coordination
Has good sense of rhythm
Enjoys imaginative play
Is strengthening fundamental physical skills through (check): running, jumping, climbing, hopping, skipping, balancing, playing ball

Ways to Probe for Progress in Reading

These items below were selected from a large sampling of report cards and indicate what different schools seek to achieve in reading and what they wish to report to parents. They are categorized by level (i.e., word perception, comprehension). Although not repeated in the table, many items, such as "Can use word attack skills" or "Grasps main idea of what is read" appear at all levels.

PRIMARY

Readiness

Enjoys listening to stories read aloud
Is developing ability to discriminate between sounds
Is developing ability to detect small differences in size and shape
Enjoys looking at books
Can tell stories from pictures
Understands left to right progression
Has fairly large vocabulary
Asks about meaning of words

Word Perception

Identifies sight vocabulary orally
Is developing word attack skills
Relates sound to given consonant and vowel forms
Recognizes all letters of alphabet
Identifies initial sounds
Identifies final sounds
Recognizes blends and digraphs
Uses phonetic understandings to identify consonant sounds in new words
Uses phonetic principles to identify vowel sounds in new words
Recognizes base words, compound words, simple functional suffixes
Uses context clue to identify words
Can recognize 90% of vocabulary on "taught" list
Can recognize 70% of vocabulary on "attack" list

Comprehension and Interpretation

Reads for meaning
Grasps main idea
Can relate important events in sequence
Recalls important details
Can compare story situations and characters
Can summarize material read
Can relate what he reads to his own life
Can distinguish between real-life stories, make-believe stories and factual material

Speed, Oral Reading

Reads silently at adequate rate
Reads well orally
Reads with expression

Study Skills

Can read and understand directions
Is able to use reading to get information

Outside Reading

Reads stories and books independently
Tells others about what he has read
Selects stories to illustrate in art
Depicts story characters through dramatization

Types of Reading

Has read with understanding (check): real-life stories, historical stories, poems, fairy tales, fables, imaginative tales, informational articles.

INTERMEDIATE

Word Perception

Is competent in using word attack skills
Is able to divide words into syllables
Recognizes and applies knowledge of prefixes and suffixes
Examines context for clues to word recognition

Vocabulary

Shows interest in idiosyncracies of language
Can identify meanings of homonyms through context and/or spelling
Can identify meanings of heteronyms through context
Is extending vocabulary through search for antonyms and synonyms
Shows interest in derivation of words
Is noting colloquial words and expressions
Can explain meaning of abstract words

Comprehension and Interpretation

Reads with understanding

Uses punctuation and other typographical devices to seek meaning
Perceives inferences and implied ideas
Recognizes and understands symbolism: allegory and other figures of speech
Can recognize and summarize story plots
Can understand framework of events
Recognizes characterization
Can generalize from what he reads
Evaluates content and makes judgments
Recognizes author's purpose
Compares and recognizes literary forms: fiction-nonfiction; historical fiction-biography; realistic stories-fables/myths; factual accounts-essays
Can distinguish between fact and opinion
Can recognize sounds of poetry – rhythm, rhyme patterns, alliteration, assonance

Speed, Oral Reading

Reads with reasonable speed
Reads orally with fluency, good phrasing, intonation, pitch and stress

Study Skills

Is able to use dictionary
Knows alphabetization
Can use pronunciation key, interpret and apply symbols
Uses context clues in choosing appropriate dictionary meaning and pronunciation
Applies reading skills to reading in content areas
Knows how to use reference materials
Knows how to use encyclopedia
Knows how to search for information in indexes, tables of contents
Can skim reading material for specific purpose
Can read maps and graphs
Can outline reference reading

Outside Reading

Reports on outside reading through oral and written reports
Enjoys and voluntarily memorizes poetry

Types of Reading

Has read with understanding (check): myths, short stories, poetry, contemporary children's books, classics, reference materials, news reports, articles

UPPER GRADES (7 AND 8)

Word Perception, Vocabulary

Applies word attack skills automatically
Voluntarily uses dictionary to find meanings/pronunciations
Is extending vocabulary through conscious effort
Can define at least 70% of words on vocabulary lists

Comprehension and Interpretation

Reads perceptively
Recognizes symbolism in literature and poetry
Recognizes irony
Reads critically
Recognizes lapses in logic: false assumptions, overgeneralization, etc.
Identifies purpose behind lapses in logic
Seeks source/justification of statements made as fact
Is alert to omissions in argument
Is aware of word connotations
Is conscious of emotional appeals
Is alert to elements of writing style
Recognizes setting, characterization, plot, theme
Recognizes character interaction and conflict

Speed

Adjusts reading speed to purpose

Study Skills

Can locate and use reference materials
Can use card catalogue
Can read with purpose, taking notes and reorganizing notes as outline
Is observant of footnotes and supplementary material
Is observant of cross-references

Outside Reading

Uses library voluntarily and frequently

Types of Reading

Has read and critically examined (check): short stories, novels, biography, plays, poetry, humorous articles, factual articles, advertisements, editorials, political statements

Chapter 4

Instruments and Approaches— Kindergarten to Senior High School

With monotonous regularity, the popular press and mass media announce "The Death of the Report Card." Articles describing the demise of the report card usually appear at seasonal intervals – at the beginning of school year, at mid-year, at the end of the school year.

The report card is neither dead or dying. It assumes different shapes, serves a variety of purposes, adapts its contents to different levels of schooling – and survives.

In this section we present examples of the report card's vitality – and utility – from kindergarten through senior high school. Each report form is different; each serves its school or school district adequately or brilliantly – until its replacement by something either better or merely different.

Shown, with brief comment, in the succeeding pages are:

Report forms used in kindergarten – from Topeka, Kan.; Grosse Pointe, Mich.; Ferguson-Florissant School District, St. Louis County, Mo.; Columbus, Ohio; and Huntington, N.Y.

Report forms used in elementary grades – from Nutley, N.J.; East Grand Rapids, Mich.; Chesterfield, Va.; Escondido Union School District, Calif.; Marlton, N.J.; Wellesley, Mass.; Inglewood, Calif.; Westbend, Wis.; Tulare, Calif.; and Bethel Park, Pa.

Report forms used in junior high school – from Glen Head, N.Y.; Philadelphia, Pa.; and Jericho, N.Y.

Report forms used in senior high school – from Parma, Ohio; Everett, Wash.; Mankato, Minn.; and Gaylord, Minn.

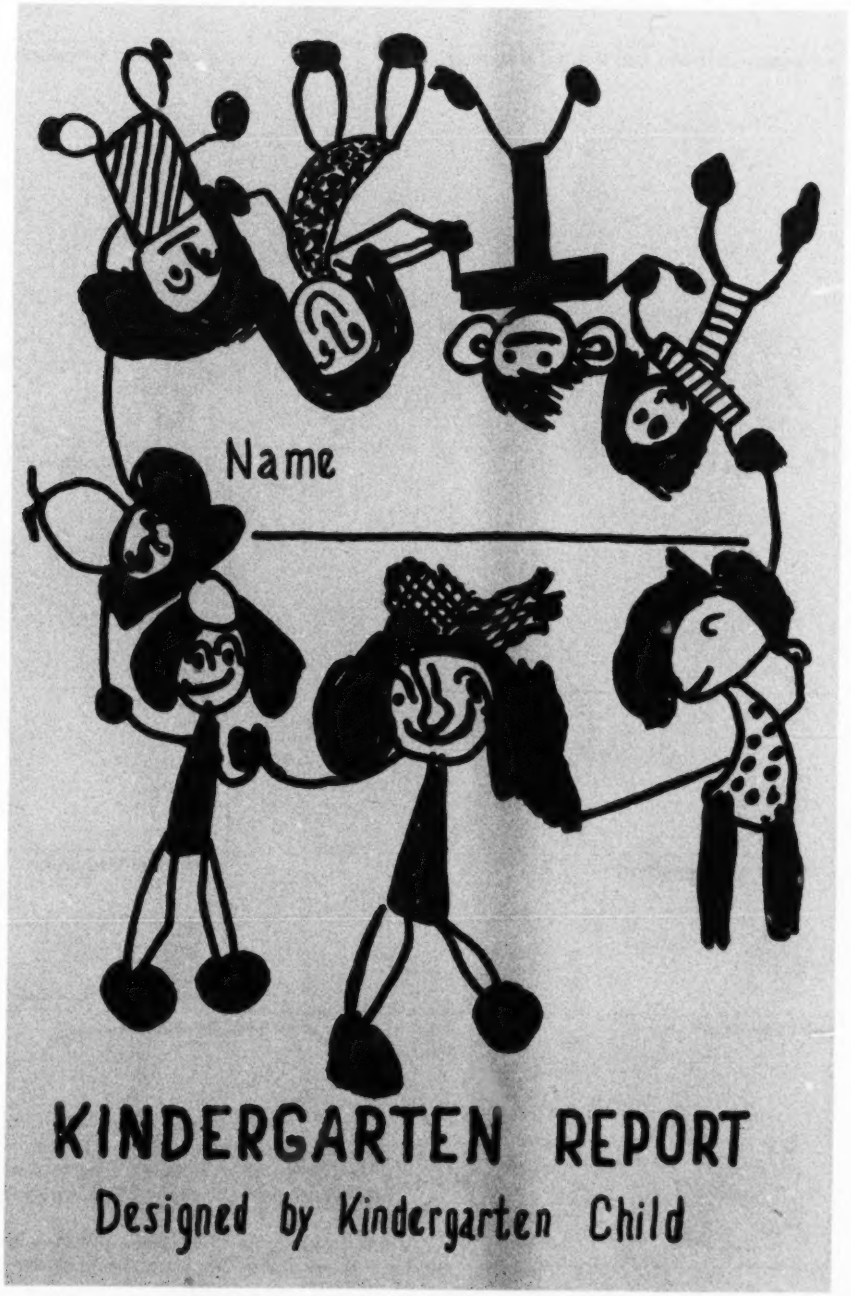
Kindergarten

— Selected instruments, reflecting a variety
of approaches to reporting progress of young children in school

The kindergarten report card in Topeka, Kan., features a cover design (see right) by a kindergarten child.

The card is a sheet of manilla paper with two folds, forming six 5" x 8" pages, one each for quarterly reports, a back page for notes to parents and a cover page.

The children are evaluated on traits categorized under the headings Emotional and Social Development; Physical Development; Language Development; Art and Music; Skills Accomplished. All items are worded positively, such as "Shares materials and toys." One of three ratings is used: Usually, Sometimes, Not Yet.



Kindergarten Progress Report

THE GROSSE POINTE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

_____ _____ _____

SCHOOL NAME GRADE

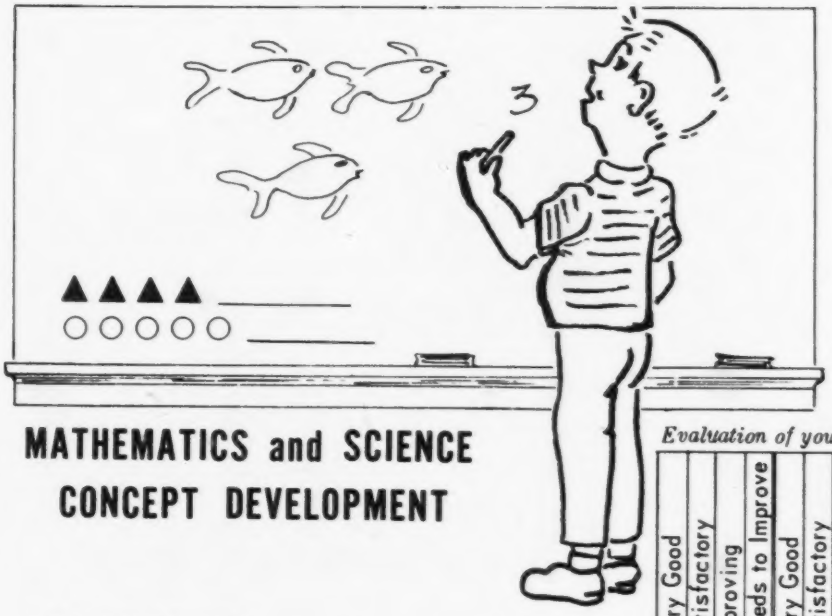
DATE OF REPORT _____ TOTAL ABSENCE _____ TOTAL TARDINESS _____

Personal Growth and School Readiness	**Perceptual Development and Reading Readiness**
Language Development	**Number Readiness**
Art	**Music**
Motor Development	**Physical Education** *Reported once a year by the physical education teacher*
Suggestions	

The kindergarten report form shown above encourages teachers in Grosse Pointe, Mich., to communicate with parents in a manner as unstructured as possible. The form is an 8½" by 11" sheet, offering space for brief comments about the child's progress in major areas of development.

At the kindergarten and early primary levels, a number of schools are providing similarly blank forms for narrative progress reports — a format that circumvents the use of symbols.

Name _____



MATHEMATICS and SCIENCE CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Evaluation of your child's progress

Your child learns to:	Very Good	Satisfactory	Improving	Needs to Improve	Very Good	Satisfactory	Improving	Needs to Improve	Very Good	Satisfactory	Improving	Needs to Improve
Observe and inquire about the world around him												
Name and draw a circle, square, rectangle, and triangle												
Reproduce a pattern by color, shape, and size												
Group objects into sets of one through ten												
Read and write numerals one through ten												
Count 25 or more objects												
Know the uses of the calendar, thermometer, and clock												
(The skills above are generally achieved before work on the skills below begins.)												
He may also learn to:												
Compare and classify objects by shape, size, texture, or use												
Name and know the value of coins, such as penny, nickel, and dime												
Add and subtract sets of five or less												

Shown here is page 3 of the kindergarten progress report in Ferguson-Florissant School District, St. Louis County, Mo., illustrating the trend toward evaluating children on the basis of performance objectives. The complete form folds to form four pages each 7" x 8½". Page 1 lists 12 objectives in the area of language development; page 4 has space for both teacher and parent comments at the end of each reporting period.

At primary and intermediate levels, this district is moving toward evaluation on the basis of performance, or behavioral objectives, and the elimination of A-B-C grading. Parent conferences are an integral part of the reporting plan at all elementary levels.

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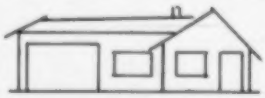
My Kindergarten Skills

The child will mark with the teacher when skill is accomplished

I can say my full name.		I can tie my shoes.	
 I can say my address.		I can put on and take off my wraps.	
I can say my telephone number.		I know how to use paint and paste.	
I know how to use a crayon.		I can use scissors properly.	
I know the eight basic colors.		I can bounce ☐ catch ☐ and throw ☐ a ball.	
I know my left and right.		I can march ☐ hop ☐ skip ☐.	

My name is _____

A page of pictures from the kindergarten report form used in Columbus, Ohio, aids children in self-evaluation. On the page shown above, the child, with the help of the teacher, checks each skill as it is accomplished.

The card has six pages (5½" x 8½"), achieved through a double fold. Two other pages illustrate 12 traits under "Desirable Attitudes and Efforts," and another page lists, without pictures, 16 items under "Academic Growth." All items are phrased in the first person, such as "I share with others," "I speak so everyone can understand me." The child, with the teacher's help, chooses among the marks C (Consistently), M (Most of the time), P (Part of the time) and N (Not at this time).

Report forms for grades 1 and 2, like the kindergarten card, picture desirable attitudes, break down subject areas into performance items related to specific skills and abilities, and offer children opportunity for self-appraisal.

ELWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
330 Cuba Hill Road
Huntington, New York

KINDERGARTEN CONFERENCE WORKSHEET

Pupil's Name_____ Teacher_____

Second Conference Date_____ Third Conference Date_____

School_____

Parent Conference Worksheet

The following listing is an outline of areas that might be discussed in your conferences with parents. This is to be considered a worksheet to help you prepare for your conferences and not a permanent record. It may be used in any manner the teacher feels will be of help in preparation for oral conferences, parent conference reports or summaries to be placed in the cumulative folder.

Key To Understanding This Report: * Shows Strength Needs Further Development

Subject Area	2nd Cfn.	3rd Cfn.	Conference Work Area
I. Social Development			
A. Cooperates when others are speaking			
B. Is attentive when others are speaking			
C. Shares willingly			
D. Accepts constructive criticism			
E. Contributes to group work			
F. Respects rights and properties of others			
G. Joins in play with other children his age			
H. Shows preference for children when both adults and children are present			

The Elwood Public Schools, Huntington, N.Y., provide teachers with a five-page kindergarten conference worksheet (8½" x 11"), outlining social behaviors, physical abilities, work habits and areas of readiness that might be discussed with parents. Shown above is page 1 of the worksheet. Altogether some 75 separate items are listed. The child is assessed on the various items in terms of an asterisk (shows strength) or with a check mark (needs further improvement) or the teacher may insert other comments. Following the conference, the parent receives a copy of the worksheet.

All reports to kindergarten parents in this school system center around conferences. The first conference is scheduled prior to the start of school, providing an opportunity for the teacher to explain the kindergarten program and for the parent to tell about the child's development so that the teacher may use this information in helping the child reach kindergarten goals.

Conference worksheets have also been developed for grades 1 and grades 2-3, where conferences and written reports are used alternately at the four reporting periods. Changes in reporting/grading procedures in line with those for primary grades are now being developed for intermediate levels.

Primary Level

– Noteworthy reporting forms in use in the first three years of schooling

PROGRESS IN SUBJECT SKILLS

	NOV.	JAN.	APR.	JUNE
Reading Level: Pre-Primer				
Primer				
Book One				

Reading Skills:

1. Is learning basic vocabulary				
2. Reads with understanding				
3. Reads well orally				
4. Shows interest in extra reading				

Mathematic Skills:

1. Recognizes numerals taught				
2. Writes numerals correctly				
3. Understands value of numerals				

Language Skills:

1. Expresses ideas well orally				
2. Speaks clearly and distinctly				
3. Listens attentively when others are speaking				

Explanation of Marks

S — Satisfactory
I — Improvement Shown
U — Unsatisfactory

Work and Study Habits:

	NOV.	JAN.	APR.	JUNE
1. Completes assigned work in allotted time				
2. Uses spare time well				
3. Works for accuracy				
4. Puts forth best efforts				
5. Follows directions				

RECORD OF ATTENDANCE

REPORTING PERIOD	Absent	Tardy
1st (Nov.)		
2nd (Jan.)		
3rd (April)		
4th (June)		

PLACEMENT FOR NEXT YEAR

GRADE..... ROOM.....

Parent-teacher conferences may be scheduled by calling the Principal's office. Please feel free to call us at any time concerning your child.

Report cards used by the public schools in Nutley, N.J., are illustrative of "first generation" modifications in reporting at the primary level. The general subject areas are broken down into subcategories, and progress is not graded in percentages or with A-B-C, but instead is assessed as S (Satisfactory), I (Improvement shown) or U (Unsatisfactory). Shown are pages 2 and 3 of the one-fold, four-page, 5" x 8" card used for grade 1. Page 4 has space for teacher and/or parent comments. This type of card has now become traditional at primary levels.

EAST GRAND RAPIDS ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

REPORT CARD 197_, 197_

The areas of Art, French, Music (vocal and instrumental), and Physical Education are intended as enrichment activities for your child. Instruction is provided to stimulate interest and enjoyment of these areas of the program. With this in mind, no specific mark will appear on the report form although teachers may use the area available to make specific, written comments.

Pupil _____

Building _____ Grade _____

Teacher _____

Principal _____

SUBJECT	1	2	3	4
READING				
Achievement				
Effort				
Attitude				
Comments:				
ENGLISH				
Achievement				
Effort				
Attitude				
Comments:				
SPELLING				
Achievement				
Effort				
Attitude				
Comments:				
HANDWRITING				
Achievement				
Effort				
Attitude				
Comments:				

SUBJECT	1	2	3	4
MATHEMATICS				
Achievement				
Effort				
Attitude				
Comments:				
SOCIAL STUDIES				
Achievement				
Effort				
Attitude				
Comments:				
SCIENCE & HEALTH				
Achievement				
Effort				
Attitude				
Comments:				
ATTENDANCE				
Half days absent				
Times tardy				

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
(Please date each comment)

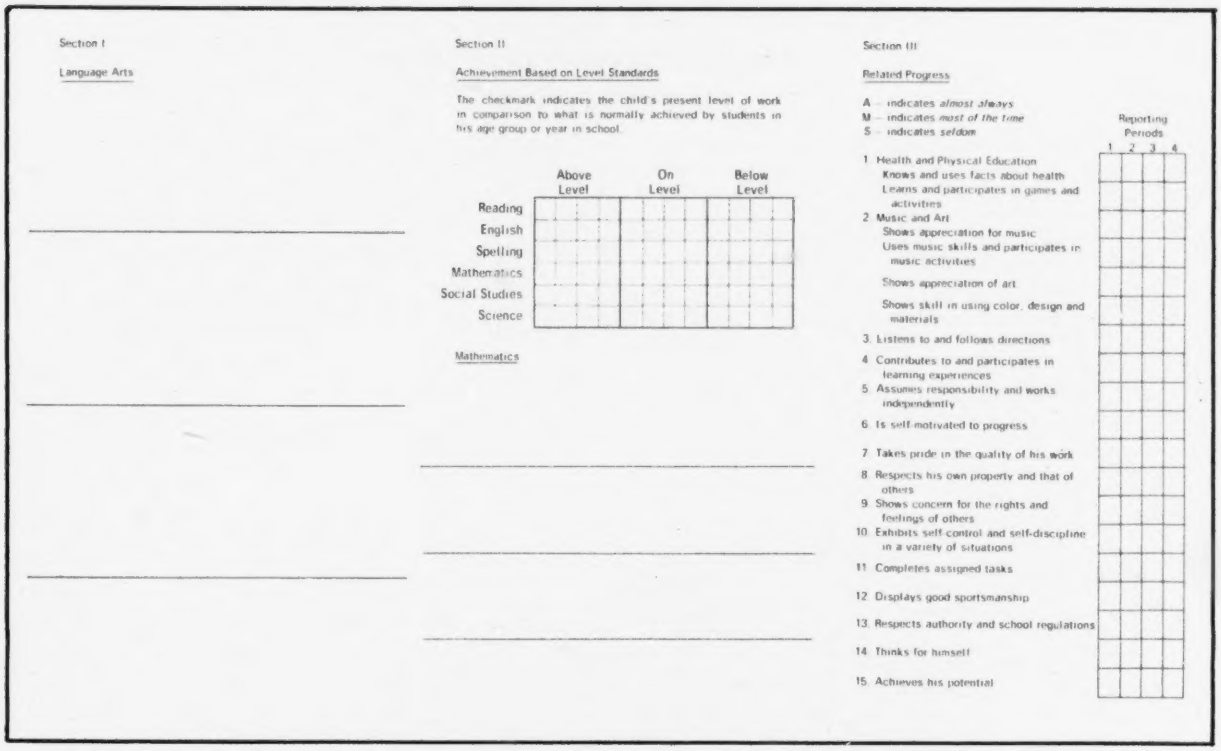
MARKING KEY

V	Very good progress for this child
S	Satisfactory progress for this child
SP	Slow progress for this child
L	Little progress for this child

ALTERNATIVES TO CARD FORMAT

1. Uses time wisely
2. Completes work faithfully
3. Works up to ability
4. Usually completes work and participates in class
5. Usually displays good effort
6. Effort fluctuates
7. Effort is negligible
8. Lacks interest
9. Capable of doing better
10. Some work late
11. Work

This form (8½" x 11") is used for the elementary grades in some East Grand Rapids, Mich., public schools. It illustrates the common practice of giving dual or triple marks. Achievement, effort and attitude each receive separate ratings for each major subject area. The ratings – V (Very good progress for this child), S (Satisfactory progress for this child), etc., make it clear that the pupil is being evaluated on the basis of individual progress.



Section I

Language Arts

Section II

Achievement Based on Level Standards

The checkmark indicates the child's present level of work in comparison to what is normally achieved by students in his age group or year in school.

	Above Level	On Level	Below Level
Reading			
English			
Spelling			
Mathematics			
Social Studies			
Science			

Mathematics

Section III

Related Progress

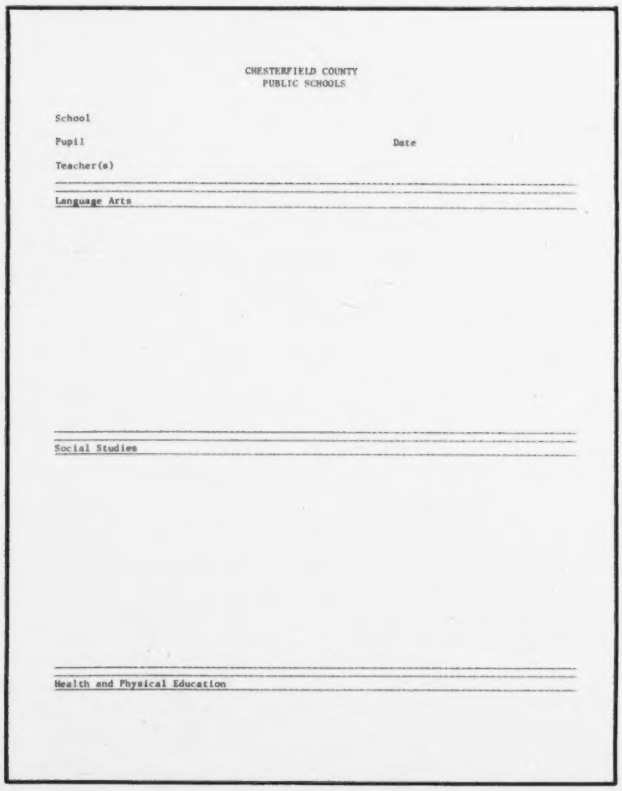
A – indicates *almost always*
M – indicates *most of the time*
S – indicates *seldom*

	Reporting Periods 1	2	3	4
1. Health and Physical Education				
Knows and uses facts about health				
Learns and participates in games and activities				
2. Music and Art				
Shows appreciation for music				
Uses music skills and participates in music activities				
Shows appreciation of art				
Shows skill in using color, design and materials				
3. Listens to and follows directions				
4. Contributes to and participates in learning experiences				
5. Assumes responsibility and works independently				
6. Is self-motivated to progress				
7. Takes pride in the quality of his work				
8. Respects his own property and that of others				
9. Shows concern for the rights and feelings of others				
10. Exhibits self-control and self-discipline in a variety of situations				
11. Completes assigned tasks				
12. Displays good sportsmanship				
13. Respects authority and school regulations				
14. Thinks for himself				
15. Achieves his potential				

Chesterfield County, Va., has moved from A-B-C grading to checklist-type reports in addition to teacher-written evaluations.

All elementary schools except three are now using the form shown above. The card is double-folded, forming six pages (4½" x 8") which offers space for written evaluations each quarter in language arts and mathematics (shown) and science and social studies. The teacher also reports whether the child is working on or below grade level and uses a checklist to rate such related behaviors as "Listens to and follows directions." He receives A (Almost always), M (Most of the time) or S (Seldom).

Three schools are using an even less structured one (shown at right). This consists of two 8½" x 11" sheets, blank except for subject headings. This is an entirely narrative report.



CHESTERFIELD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School

Pupil Date

Teacher(s)

Language Arts

Social Studies

Health and Physical Education

GLEN VIEW SCHOOL

Pupil_____ Date_____

Teacher_____ Grade 2

Dear Parents,

The list presented here is intended to give you a better understanding of your child's accomplishments this quarter. The list is by no means complete, but merely provides a brief summary of basic skills presented this quarter.

	Mastered	In Progress	Readiness	Not Observed
READING, PHONICS				
Long Vowel Sounds				
Short Vowel Sounds				
Can Unlock Words Using Phonetic Analysis				
Uses Pictorial and Context Clues to Aid in Reading				
Reads With Understanding				
Is Able to Read Orally in Complete Thought Units				
LANGUAGE ARTS				
Is Able to Spell Assigned and Basic Vocabulary Words				
Is Able to Write Simple Sentences				
Understands Use of Periods, Question Marks, and Capital Letters				
Can Form Letters Legibly and Correctly				
Can Express Ideas Clearly in Written Form				
Takes Part in Oral Discussion				
Verbalizes Ideas Clearly				
MATH				
Can Form Numerals Correctly				
Can Identify Cardinal and Ordinal Numbers to Ten				
Knows Addition and Subtraction Facts to Ten				
Understands Mathematical Vocabulary (sets, addend, sum, greater than, less than, equal to, number line, equation)				
Can Work with Manipulative Materials Profitably (counters, cuisenaire rods, beansticks, abacus, geoboards, tangrams)				
SOCIAL STUDIES				
Understands the Idea of a Community				
Knows the Uses of Maps and Globes				
Understands the Use of Scale and Legend				
Can Locate Simple Points and Areas on the Globe				
SCIENCE				
Understands the Idea of Molecules				
Participates in Discussions and Experiments				
Is Able to Draw Conclusions on the Basis of Experiments				
MUSIC				
Enjoys Music Activities				
Participates in Music Activities				
Is Able to Listen to and Interpret Music				
ART				
Shows Originality				
Is Able to Use a Variety of Media (scissors, paste, tempera, crayons)				
Can Use Materials Effectively				

This grade 2 report form, from Glen View School, Escondido Union School District, Calif., illustrates the trend toward giving parents details on what their children are learning in school.

The form is an 8½" x 11" mimeographed sheet presenting a list which has been prepared (as the introduction points out) to give parents a better understanding of their child's accomplishments during the quarter. The school uses similar checklists to detail children's accomplishments in each area at first- and third-grade levels.

"We recognize that all children are individuals and learn at different rates," says the Board of Education of Evesham Township, Marlton, N.J., in its policy on grading and reporting.

The reporting instrument shown in part at the right is used in grades 1-3 to carry out this policy.

The report card is elongated (6" x 16½"), but with two folds it converts to a manageable size for delivery to parents.

The school system has four report periods, two for conferences and two for report cards. Worksheets for conferences dovetail in approach with that shown on the card.

Children are evaluated on 60 items under subject headings and "Work and Social Habits." Assessments include: Commendable progress; Is improving; Needs to improve. Reading level is indicated.

A regulation of the school system reads: "All work completed by children, including tests, daily work, homework, projects, etc., will be marked or graded in relation to the wording used on the report card."

READING

Reading level is indicated by the basal reader level or programmed reader number. The programmed reader number does not indicate grade level.

Since programmed reading is an individualized program whereby each child works at his own speed and capabilities, he should not be compared with others in his class.

	1	2			3	4		
Programmed Reading book number								
Basal Reader								

√—The check mark indicates the progress your child is making.	1	2			3	4		
	Commendable Progress for this Child	Satisfactory Progress for this Child	Is Improving	Needs to Improve	Commendable Progress for this Child	Satisfactory Progress for this Child	Is Improving	Needs to Improve
Reading								
1. Uses word attack skills on new words								
2. Retains most of the vocabulary taught								
3. Understands and interprets what is read								
4. Reads well orally								
5. Is able to work well each day in reading book								
6. Takes dictation correctly								
7. Shows interest in reading								
8. Shows good test results								
9.								
Arithmetic								
1. Demonstrates ability to use number skills								
2. Can tell time and use simple measuring devices								
3. Can solve word problems								
4. Is accurate in computing								
5. Completes assigned classwork								
6.								
Spelling (Book Level)								
1. Writes spelling words correctly								
2. Can use spelling words in sentences								
3. Spells correctly in other written work								
4. Takes dictation correctly								
5. Completes assigned classwork								
6.								
Language								
1. Uses language correctly in speaking								
2. Expresses thoughts clearly								
3. Uses correct form in written work								
4. Takes part in discussion								
5. Completes assigned classwork								
6. Understands grammar and usage								
7. Punctuates correctly								
8. Comprehends meaning of words								
9.								
Social Studies								
1. Takes part in group activities								
2. Contributes to class discussion								
3. Completes unit work								
4. Organizes and utilizes materials used in class								
5. Can find and use materials needed								
6. Completes assigned classwork								
7. Understands concepts taught								
8.								
Science								
1. Takes part in group activities								
2. Contributes to class discussion								
3. Completes unit work								
4. Organizes and utilizes materials used in class								
5. Can find and use materials needed								
6. Completes assigned classwork								
7. Understands concepts taught								
8.								
Writi...								

TEACHER CONFERENCE

TEACHER CONFERENCE

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Elementary Grades

– Variety of grading philosophy and of reporting methods are indicated in the samples reproduced here

GRADES 5 and 6

FISKE SCHOOL — PUPIL PROGRESS CHART — YEAR: 197__ 197__

STUDENT'S NAME _____ MARKING KEY: 1 = Steady Progress 2 = Slow Progress TEACHER'S NAME _____

GRADE _____

LANGUAGE ARTS	Conf.	Jan.	April	June
Reading				
reads with understanding				
uses word attack skills				
has an adequate and growing vocabulary				
reads independently				
knows how to use dictionary				
knows how to locate information				
reads well orally				
uses library				
completes and hands in homework				
Language Development				
knows assigned spelling				
spells correctly in independent writing				
uses correct punctuation				
uses correct grammar in speaking				
uses correct grammar in writing				
expresses ideas well orally				
expresses ideas well in writing				
shows originality				
organizes materials well				
proofreads carefully				
writes neat, legible papers				
completes and hands in homework				

GRADE LEVEL: below ☐ at ☐ above ☐

MATHEMATICS	Conf.	Jan.	Apri
Knows basic facts and operations			
Addition			
Subtraction			
Multiplication			
Division			
Fractions			
Decimals			
New Math			
Geometry			
Understands concepts			
Solves problems			
Works accurately			
Completes and hands in homework			

Grade Level: below ☐ at ☐ above ☐

SOCIAL STUDIES			
Growth in critical thinking			
Participates in discussions			
Uses reference materials			
Completes and hands in homework			

Grade Level: below ☐ at ☐ above ☐

SCIENCE			
Understands and applies pertinent concepts			
Uses scientific methods			
Follows directions			
Completes and hands in homework			

Grade Level: below ☐ at ☐ above ☐

The 12 elementary schools in Wellesley, Mass., were given the opportunity to design and implement their own evaluation and reporting system. Shown above is one side of the report form (8½" x 11") developed in Fiske School for grades 5 and 6. The habits, skills and abilities that contribute to success are identified for each subject. Numbers are used to indicate the child's achievement in each, on the basis of his own individual capabilities and rate of growth (1 – Steady progress, 2 – Slow progress). The reverse side offers items under special subjects, work and study skills, and citizenship.

Other alternatives to traditional grading and reporting at middle-grade levels include narrative reports (Marshall L. Perrin School), with no rating or rating symbols used except for study skills and citizenship; and separate cards for each subject area which offer more space for elaboration on curriculum objectives and for parent and teacher comment (Warren School).

FRANK D. PARENT SCHOOL

STUDENT SELF EVALUATION REPORT

OF _____

We, as parents and teachers, wish for our children to be more responsible and accountable for their own growth. This report form gives your child an opportunity to evaluate, along with us, how well he is doing and where he needs to improve.

STUDY HABITS AND ATTITUDES	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
I use my best effort when I work			
I work without bothering others			
I listen well			
I follow directions			
I try to finish what I start			
I take care of the things I use			

Grades 4-5-6

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND APPRECIATIONS

	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
I like to share experiences			
I enjoy reading			
I read well			
I like to write reports			
I like to write stories			
I write all my work carefully			
I spell my words carefully			
I enjoy art			
I enjoy music			
I like physical education			
I am a good sport			
I enjoy math			

I have improved these math skills_____

_____

In math I am learning about_____

_____

I would like to learn more about_____

_____

_____

At Frank D. Parent Elementary School, Inglewood Unified School District, Calif., parents of middle-graders may choose between the district report cards, with traditional A-B-C grading, or may take part in a narrative evaluation and reporting system developed for use at that particular school. Last year 75% of the parents chose the informal, narrative system.

The narrative system uses three evaluation and reporting instruments. The one pictured above is an 8½" x 11" mimeographed sheet providing for self-evaluation by the student. He answers each item, whether it pertains to study habits and attitudes or to knowledge, skills and appreciations, with Yes, No or Sometimes. He also fills in blanks which may start: I have improved in these math skills _____; In math I am learning about _____; I would like to learn more about _____. This form is sent home to the parent each quarter along with two other forms.

One is an 8½" x 11" sheet on which the teacher comments under the following headings: (1) Your child's recent progress: _____ [in studies under way]; (2) Your child's difficulties seem at this time to be: _____; (3) Your child's special strengths seem to be: _____.

The other is a sheet of the same size on which the parent is asked to answer the following questions: (1) How is this description [in the teacher's report] similar to your child's behavior at home? (2) How is the description different from your child's behavior at home? (3) What is your main area of concern? A note asks the parent, if he wishes, to indicate a convenient date and time for a conference.

NAME _____

SCIENCE 6

☐ WORKING AT OR NEAR CAPACITY
☐ MAKING MODERATE USE OF ABILITY
☐ PUTS FORTH LITTLE OR NO EFFORT

SKILLS

1. Displays awareness of the physical world
2. Displays powers of observation
3. Displays ability to form independent conclusions based upon observations and experimentations
4. Involves himself in group work

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

1. Works independently
2. Demonstrates responsibility
3. Displays cooperative attitude
4. Seeks help when needed
5. Gets along well with peers
6. Demonstrates good study habits

COMMENTS:

EXCELLENT PROGRESS	ADEQUATE PROGRESS	NEEDS TO IMPROVE

Teacher _____

NAME _____

MATH 6

☐ WORKING AT OR NEAR CAPACITY
☐ MAKING MODERATE USE OF ABILITY
☐ PUTS FORTH LITTLE OR NO EFFORT

SKILLS

1. Shows accuracy in computation of whole numbers
   a. addition
   b. subtraction
   c. multiplication
   d. division
2. Knows and can interpret mathematical vocabulary
3. Can apply mathematical operations to problem solving situations
4. Solves unfamiliar problems and seeks to understand new materials

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

1. Works independently
2. Demonstrates responsibility
3. Displays cooperative attitude
4. Seeks help when needed
5. Gets along well with peers
6. Demonstrates good study habits

COMMENTS:

EXCELLENT PROGRESS	ADEQUATE PROGRESS	NEEDS TO IMPROVE

Teacher _____

At all levels, there is a trend to be more specific as to what children are learning and doing in school, and how they are progressing in various aspects of each subject. Report forms, therefore, must have more pages, be elongated, or — as in the case of those at Silverbrook Middle School, Joint School District No. 1, Westbend, Wis. — they may consist of separate forms for each subject.

Shown above are two report forms (5½" x 8½"), for science and for mathematics, selected from a packet of eight.

In each subject, the student is checked first as to effort (Working at or near capacity; Making moderate use of ability; Puts forth little or no effort). Then he is rated on skills, and on attitudes and behaviors as to whether he is making Excellent progress, Adequate progress, or Needs more progress. There is ample space on the forms for comment. A packet of fresh forms is sent each reporting period.

TULARE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT REPORT TO PARENTS

Pupil _____ Grade _____ Subject _____ Teacher _____

School _____ Principal _____ Phone _____ 19 -19

QUARTER	1	2	3	4
Above Grade Level				
At Grade Level				
Below Grade Level				
Work and Study Habits				
Attitudes and Behavior				

1. Indicates Outstanding Effort
2. Indicates Satisfactory Effort
3. Unsatisfactory Effort

Attendance — Regular / Irregular

PARENT COMMENTS Please feel free to return this report with any comments or questions that you may have

COMMENTS:
1st
2nd
3rd
4th

12M 8 70

In Tulare, Calif., the schools have eliminated A-B-C as grades, replacing them with a system of evaluation in reference to the curriculum the student is working in.

At the right is shown a summary report form (5½" x 8½") sent to parents each quarter to indicate the pupil's level of work and his study habits, attitudes and behavior. This form is sent with a set of mimeographed sheets (three for grade 1, six or seven for grade 8) which outline in detail the curriculum and/or goals in each subject. Check marks are used to indicate content mastered or under way. This detailing of curriculum includes both academic subjects and special subjects, as illustrated below through the excerpts from the grade 4 lists for art and music. Teachers present further evaluations, narrative-style, on separate 8½" x 11" memo sheets.

MUSIC - GRADE FOUR
EXPLORING MUSIC 4

Is gaining a basic understanding of melody, rhythm and harmony through:

- playing tonettes
- playing other instruments
- moving to music
- music reading
- singing
- listening

- Review of all 3rd grade objectives
- Feeling of time signatures $\frac{6}{8}$ and $\frac{2}{4}$
- Note values, sixteenth notes
- Note name
- First and second endings
- D.C. Da Capo, Fine
- D.S. or D.S. al Fine, (from the sign)
- Understanding Keys: C, F, and G
- Rounds (texture)
- Two part signing (texture)
- Creating their own dance & music
- Creating ostinato to certain selections in text
- Key of C, G and F using autoharp
- Use of the autoharp, guitar, tonettes or recorders
- Use of folk dances

ART - GRADE FOUR

- Uses research & field trips for creative motivation
- Sees exhibits & reproductions of artist's work
- Mixes colors to meet creative needs
- Aware of light & dark, full & bright
- Developing concept of depth
- Developing figure drawing in action
- Exploring visual representation through sketching actual models
- Awareness of balance & composition
- Uses lines, texture, color creatively
- Aware of arts & crafts of other cultures
- Uses overlapping & simple perspective
- Has expressed thoughts & feelings in visual terms through the use of:
  - painting: tempera paint
  - drawing: crayon, colored chalk
  - paper mache
  - weaving, stitchery
  - paper sculpture
  - collage
  - modeling: clay, dough
  - murals
  - constructions: wood, reed, wire, cardboard
  - printing: monotype, string, styrofoam
  - watercolor
  - mixed media
  - mosaics
  - lettering & posters
  - seasonal activities

BETHEL PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT

SOCIAL STUDIES - Level F

Student_____ Teacher_____

	Working Toward Objective	Objective Achieved	COMMENTS 1	2	3	4
A. Applies an understanding of physical geography (map and globe skills; terms; symbols) through the study of Canada						
B. Shows an understanding of:						
1. Colonization of Northeast						
2. Colonization of South						
3. Colonization of Middle States						
4. Struggle for Freedom and Firm Government						
5. Expansion of the Continent						
6. Newest States of U.S.A.						
7. A Nation Divided (Civil War)						

Current reporting instruments used at elementary and middle school levels in Bethel Park, Pa., show how the district is bringing evaluation in line with individualized instruction and efforts to help each child progress at his own rate in line with his own level of ability.

Shown above is one form (8½" x 11") from a set of reports sent quarterly to parents of students at Level F (fifth grade). This form covers social studies, providing opportunity for the teacher to check whether the pupil is meeting or has met objectives, and to offer comments. Similar forms cover all other subjects and "Behavior Management."

The behavior form includes "Practices good citizenship," but emphasizes behaviors essential in independent study, obviously important in an individualized program; for example: "Finds, seeks and obtains help when needed," "Evaluates and checks work in a responsible manner," "Directs himself toward new goals." Ratings are C (Consistently), O (Occasionally) and N (Not yet).

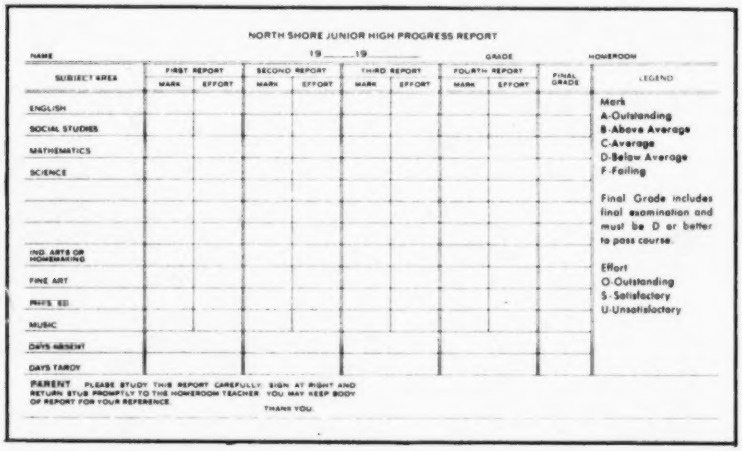
Parents receive two additional forms at the end of the year – one a summary sheet on achievement of objectives, the other providing information on the pupil's scores on standardized achievement tests.

This district times its reports to aid individualized instruction. The first three reports are staggered for various pupils to reduce comparison and competition, pupil to pupil, and to give teachers more time to prepare evaluations. The staggering of reports accommodates the scheduling of semiannual parent conferences, which are an essential ingredient of this individualized evaluation system.

Junior High School

– New concepts in evaluation are incorporated in the reporting instruments used in the middle grades

Sending home a packet of reports, one for each course, is becoming increasingly common in junior high school. North Shore Junior High School, Glen Head, N.Y., does so only at the end of the first quarter (see card reproduced). Forms for quarterly reports list only courses (see illustration above), and work is graded with traditional letters.



NORTH SHORE JUNIOR HIGH PROGRESS REPORT

NAME _____ 19___19___ GRADE _____ HOMEROOM _____

SUBJECT AREA	FIRST REPORT MARK	FIRST REPORT EFFORT	SECOND REPORT MARK	SECOND REPORT EFFORT	THIRD REPORT MARK	THIRD REPORT EFFORT	FOURTH REPORT MARK	FOURTH REPORT EFFORT	FINAL GRADE
ENGLISH									
SOCIAL STUDIES									
MATHEMATICS									
SCIENCE									
IND. ARTS OR HOMEMAKING									
FINE ART									
PHYS. ED.									
MUSIC									
DAYS ABSENT									
DAYS TARDY									

LEGEND

Mark
A-Outstanding
B-Above Average
C-Average
D-Below Average
F-Failing

Final Grade includes final examination and must be D or better to pass course.

Effort
O-Outstanding
S-Satisfactory
U-Unsatisfactory

PARENT PLEASE STUDY THIS REPORT CAREFULLY SIGN AT RIGHT AND RETURN STUB PROMPTLY TO THE HOMEROOM TEACHER YOU MAY KEEP BODY OF REPORT FOR YOUR REFERENCE

THANK YOU.

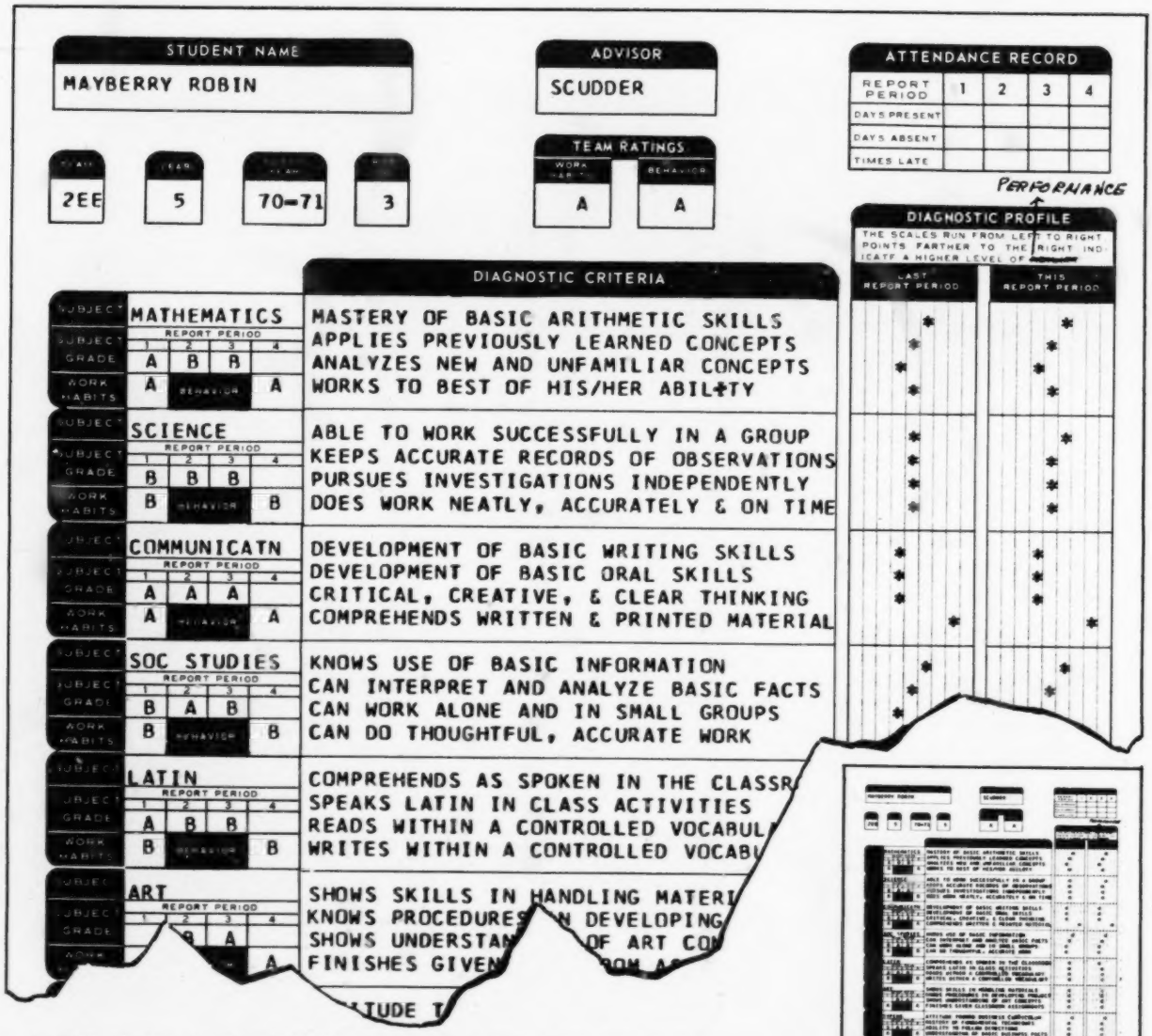
NORTH SHORE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
SEVENTH GRADE 19__ to 19__

STUDENT_____

HOMEROOM_____

M A T H E M A T I C S	Estimated achievement of student in relation to himself S=Satisfactory N=Needs Improvement	Estimated achievement of student in relation to class E=Excellent S=Satisfactory N=Needs Improvement
Grasps mathematical concepts		
Shows computational skills		
Shows mathematical curiosity		
Uses problem solving techniques		
Participates in class discussion		
Works independently		
Completes work		

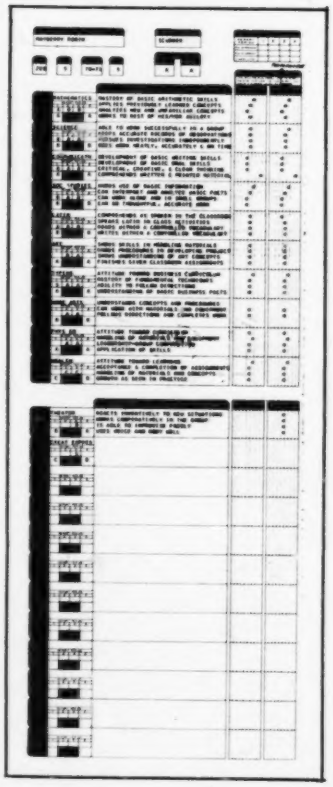
Additional Comments:



In Philadelphia, the Russell H. Conwell Middle Magnet School (grades 5-8) has been experimenting with reporting changes since 1966. The school searched for an instrument that would give student and parent specific information on the student's strengths and weaknesses in each subject so that he might plan with his teachers his next steps in learning.

The instrument developed is a computerized 8" x 22" sheet (shown in miniature at right) which offers sufficient space through the year for reporting on all courses a student may take. The format provides for three types of quarterly evaluations (see portion reproduced above):

- Social behavior (see top of form, where work habits and behavior are marked under "Team Ratings"). The ratings are expressed in letters A-E.
- Overall performance (see left of form). Letter grades are used for ratings.
- Profile of strengths and weaknesses (see right of form). Here students are rated on a scale of 9 on relative performance in the most important aspects of each subject.



53

JERICHO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
JERICHO, NEW YORK

EVALUATION

Teacher_____ Student_____

Counselor_____ Dates (from)_____(to)_____

Analogy as a Thought Process_____ Grade_____ Subject English

Code: 1 -- The student has demonstrated that he has met the objective.
2 -- The student has demonstrated progress toward meeting the objective.
3 -- The student has demonstrated that at this time he has not met the objective.
4 -- The student has not demonstrated whether or not he has met the objective.
5 -- The objective does not apply at this time.

BASIC INFORMATION:

_____ 1. The student can identify comparisons which use like, as, than, and is.

_____ 2. The student can identify comparisons which do not use like, as, than or is. (The teacher threw the student out of class. Student = ball.)

_____ 3. The student can recognize the similarity in two unlike items.

UNDERSTANDING:

_____ 1. The student can distinguish between the is of identity and the is of comparison. (I am John. I am a block of wood.)

_____ 2. The student can distinguish between the literal sense of a poem and the meaning suggested by its comparisons.

APPLICATION:

_____ 1. The student can compose original sentences which make a comparison without using words such as like, as, or than.

_____ 2. Given a comparison, the student can extend it into a paragraph.

On these two facing pages is shown the report form sent parents of junior high school students in Jericho, N.Y., after the students have completed a unit in English entitled "Analogy as a Thought Process."

In all courses, the students are being evaluated on the basis of behavioral objectives. The evaluation forms (one per unit) state in precise terms the concepts to be mastered. No grades are given. Instead, the evaluation is in terms of whether the student has demonstrated that he has met the particular objective, that he is meeting it, etc. (see code at top of form). There are no specific times for the reports; a teacher sends one out at the completion of a unit.

Although many schools claim to be evaluating growth on the basis of performance, few have developed evaluative criteria that meet the precise definition of "behavioral objectives" as well as those at Jericho Junior High School, especially in areas of English other than grammar and composition. The implementation of such an evaluation system requires much more than a new reporting instrument -- it means an entirely new approach in teaching.

ANALYSIS:

____ 1. Given a poem, the student can determine the comparison(s) by which the poet develops his idea.

____ 2. Given a short story, the student can determine the comparison(s) by which the author explains a character's life.

____ 3. Having seen a movie, the student can determine the comparison(s) by which the lives of the characters are explained.

____ 4. Given a selection, the student can detect the clues which support his identification of an aut or's comparison.

SYNTHESIS:

____ 1. Having developed a subject through several comparisons, the student can conclude that his choice of comparison determines what he can say about that subject.

EVALUATION:

____ 1. Given a comparison, the student can judge the speaker's attitude toward his subject.

____ 2. The student can appraise the conclusions to which an author's comparisons have led him.

- -

(Tear along this line)

JERICHO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
JERICHO, NEW YORK

Check one:

Date_____

____ I have read the attached evaluation.

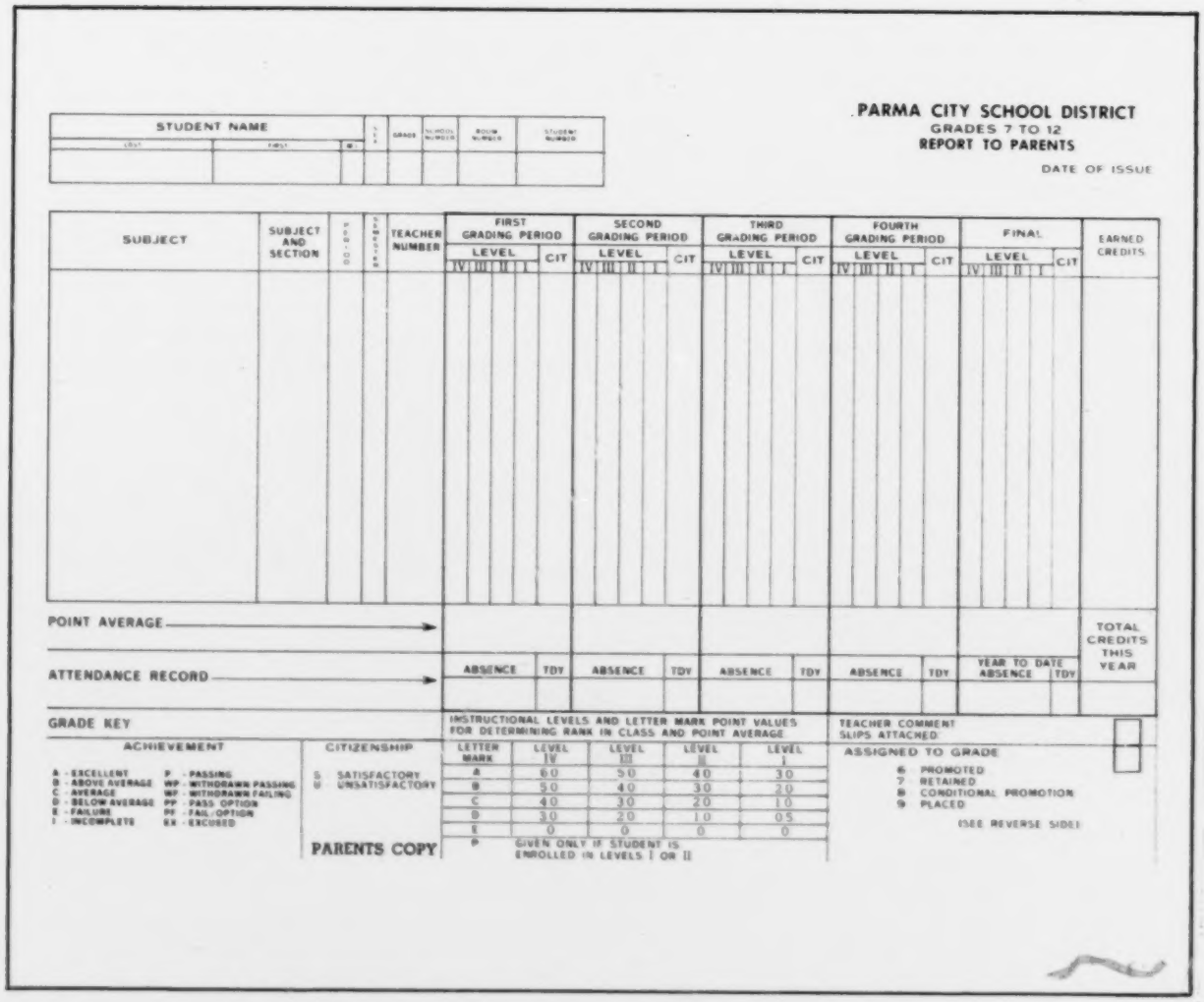
____ I have read the attached evaluation and I feel it necessary to meet with you to further discuss my child's progress.

Please call me_____at_____.
Phone Number Time

_____ English _____
Student's Name Subject Signature of Parent or Guardian

Senior High School

– Traditional report cards give way to new ventures in grading and reporting at the upper secondary grades



PARMA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
GRADES 7 TO 12
REPORT TO PARENTS

DATE OF ISSUE

STUDENT NAME							
LAST	FIRST	M		GRADE	SCHOOL NUMBER	ROOM NUMBER	STUDENT NUMBER

SUBJECT	SUBJECT AND SECTION	PERIOD	SEMESTER	TEACHER NUMBER	FIRST GRADING PERIOD		SECOND GRADING PERIOD		THIRD GRADING PERIOD		FOURTH GRADING PERIOD		FINAL		EARNED CREDITS
					LEVEL IV III II I	CIT	LEVEL IV III II I	CIT	LEVEL IV III II I	CIT	LEVEL IV III II I	CIT	LEVEL IV III II I	CIT	
POINT AVERAGE →															TOTAL CREDITS THIS YEAR
ATTENDANCE RECORD →					ABSENCE	TDY	ABSENCE	TDY	ABSENCE	TDY	ABSENCE	TDY	YEAR TO DATE ABSENCE	TDY	

GRADE KEY

ACHIEVEMENT

A - EXCELLENT
B - ABOVE AVERAGE
C - AVERAGE
D - BELOW AVERAGE
E - FAILURE
I - INCOMPLETE
P - PASSING
WP - WITHDRAWN PASSING
WF - WITHDRAWN FAILING
PP - PASS OPTION
PF - FAIL OPTION
EX - EXCUSED

CITIZENSHIP

S SATISFACTORY
U UNSATISFACTORY

PARENTS COPY

INSTRUCTIONAL LEVELS AND LETTER MARK POINT VALUES FOR DETERMINING RANK IN CLASS AND POINT AVERAGE

LETTER MARK	LEVEL IV	LEVEL III	LEVEL II	LEVEL I
A	60	50	40	30
B	50	40	30	20
C	40	30	20	10
D	30	20	10	05
E	0	0	0	0
P	GIVEN ONLY IF STUDENT IS ENROLLED IN LEVELS I OR II			

TEACHER COMMENT SLIPS ATTACHED

ASSIGNED TO GRADE

6 PROMOTED
7 RETAINED
8 CONDITIONAL PROMOTION
9 PLACED

(SEE REVERSE SIDE)

The new quarterly reporting form used for all secondary grades in Parma, Ohio, is shown above. The back of the form (7" x 10") explains that instructional levels I, II, III and IV have been set up to accommodate instruction appropriate to student ability; that the A-B-C grades, used at all ability levels, will be weighted and converted to points for determining class rank and scholastic achievement. Thus an A in a level IV course equals 6 points, but A in a level I course equals only 3 points.

Parma tempers its statistical system, however. Detailed midterm reports, stressing individual progress, are written on the basis of teacher-student conferences and sent home. As a final grade, a teacher may award a P (for Passing) to a conscientious student of limited ability who has done his best. The P provides credit toward graduation, but has no grade-point value.

STUDENT PROGRESS REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT	SCHOOL
MUKILTEO	MARINER HIGH SCHOOL

EXPLANATORY REMARKS

AVERAGE PROGRESS IN EACH CLASS IS TEN LEVELS FOR A 15 WEEK TERM. HONORS ARE NOTED UNDER COMMENTS WHERE THE STUDENT HAS PERFORMED HIGH QUALITY WORK. ENRICHMENT IS ATTAINED BY PRODUCING A QUANTITY OF WORK BEYOND THE REQUIRED LEVELS.

STUDENT NO.	NAME	GRADE LEVEL	DAYS ABSENT	HOME ROOM/STUDENT ADVISOR	PERIOD ENDING
71		11			04/23/71

COURSE/TEACHER	PERIOD	GRADE OR LEVEL	CREDITS	CLASS ABS.	TEACHER COMMENTS
HUM-6 (ENGLISH) MISS BRESEE 13		15	1.0	1	HAS COMPLETED MORE THAN THE REQUIRED LEVELS CONSISTENTLY DOING HIGH QUALITY WORK PLANS FOR AND USES STUDY TIME WELL HAS EARNED ENRICHMENT LEVELS
SWITCHBD OPERATOR MR. BULL 18		10	1.0		
BOOKKEEPING 4 MR. BULL 17		13	1.0	3	HAS EARNED HONORS IN THIS SUBJECT VERY COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE AND IS EAGER TO LEARN CONSISTENTLY DOING HIGH QUALITY WORK HAS A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON OTHERS HAS EARNED ENRICHMENT LEVELS PLANS FOR AND USES STUDY TIME WELL
STUDENT STORE MISS KING 51		10	1.0		HAS EARNED HONORS IN THIS SUBJECT IS SELF CONTROLLED AND ADAPTABLE TO NEW SITUATIONS VERY COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE AND IS EAGER TO LEARN CONSISTENTLY DOING HIGH QUALITY WORK
HUM-6 (HIST-GOV) MR. PEIGHTEL 76		10	1.0		HAS EARNED HONORS IN THIS SUBJECT HAS DONE ENRICHMENT WITHIN REGULAR LEVELS CONSISTENTLY DOING HIGH QUALITY WORK
SHORTHAND 2 MR. ROSIER 95		10	1.0		HAS EARNED HONORS IN THIS SUBJECT VERY COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE AND IS EAGER TO LEARN HAS COMPLETED THE REQUIRED LEVELS PLANS FOR AND USES STUDY TIME WELL
EXEC TYPING MR ROSIER 94		09	1.0		VERY COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE AND IS EAGER TO LEARN HAS EARNED HONORS IN THIS SUBJECT CONSISTENTLY DOING HIGH QUALITY WORK PLANS FOR AND USES STUDY TIME WELL HAS A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON OTHERS IS A CREATIVE INDIVIDUAL

*** STUDENT EARNED 8.0 CREDITS THIS TERM AND NOW HAS 51.0 OF THE 40 CREDITS REQUIRED F

Mariner High School, Everett, Wash. (Mukilteo School District No. 6), has devised a way to report achievement that eliminates A-B-C grading. The report requires explanation of the school's individualized program:

The school year is divided into two 15-week terms and a final six-week "miniterm." Each year-long course is divided, on the basis of objectives to be met by students, into 20 levels of accomplishment, with 10 levels per 15-week term as an average. A student progresses through each level at his own rate. He may complete the 20 before or at the end of the second 15-week term – in which case, he proceeds to enrichment levels and/or new subjects, perhaps gaining an additional credit or part credit toward graduation. If the student does not complete the 20 levels at the average rate, he may complete them during the miniterm or the next year. Nothing he has completed needs to be repeated or is "wasted."

The report shows the number of levels the student has completed in each course during the second 15-week term and the number of credits he has earned at that time. Note the teacher comments. These are selected from a comment bank of 50 available for processing by computer.

Upon request the school will convert its evaluation to traditional grades.

MANKATO AREA VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

PROGRESS REPORT

Student's Name _____ Month _____ Year _____

Course _____ Days Present _____

Days Absent _____

Rated by _____ Date _____ Times Tardy _____

Hours school in session this marking _____

Hours accumulated this marking period _____

Hours accumulated previously _____

Hours accumulated, TOTAL _____

GRADING SYSTEM

Grade	Grade Points
A Excellent - - - - - - - (100 - 90)	4.0
B Above Average - - - (89 - 80)	3.0
C Average - - - - - - - - -(79 - 70)	2.0
D Below Average - - - (69 - 65)	1.0
F Failure - - - - - - - - - (64 -)	0

Place an (X) in each rating section that describes this student. After completing the categories that apply in your field, weigh their significance and arrive at an over-all grade. The over-all grade may or may not be a cumulative average of the various categories. The over-all grade will be based on the instructor's evaluation of what he believes are the measures of success in this field of employment. (i.e. How do I rate this student as a prospective employee?).

STUDENT PERFORMANCE	Does Not Apply	4.0 A	3.0 B	2.0 C	1.0 D	0 F
1. Quality of work (ability to meet high standards)						
2. Quantity of work (speed in performance)						
3. Job knowledge (ability to perform an assigned task)						
4. Housekeeping (ability to clean and maintain tools, equipment and stations)						
5. Adaptability (adjustment to task or situation)						
6. Cooperation (ability to work with others)						
7. Initiative (ability to work without constant supervision)						
8. Judgement (ability to make sound decisions)						
9. Leadership (ability to lead others in a desired direction or toward desired goal)						
10. Dependability (reliability, honesty, integrity, etc.)						
11. Personal appearance (dress, neatness, cleanliness, etc.)						
12. Related class work (in shop)						
13.						
14.						

Please comment on the student's strong points; and weak points in job performance and adjustment to the setting.

In vocational-technical schools, it is essential to evaluate student performance on the basis of skills, knowledge and characteristics needed for success on the job. The Mankato Area Vocational-Technical Institute, Independent School District No. 77, Mankato, Minn., has devised the quarterly report form shown above which is adaptable to all trade and technical courses. The voc-tech instructors arrive at a student's final grade in a course not by averaging the points awarded for the various items listed, but by considering both the average and the items they think most essential for successful employment in jobs related to the course.

GAYLORD HIGH SCHOOL REPORT TO PARENTS

STUDENT _____ Year 19____19 _____ Grade _____

Areas of Study		1	2	3	4	Avg.	Exam	Fin. Gr
ENGLISH	ACH.							
	APP.							
	ACH.							
	APP.							
	ACH.							
	APP.							
	ACH.							
	APP.							
	ACH.							
	APP.							
	ACH.							
	APP.							
	ACH.							
	APP.							
	ACH.							
	APP.							
PHY. ED.	ACH.							
	APP.							

THIS REPORT IS YOUR RECORD
IT NEED NOT BE RETURNED

MARK INTERPRETATION

Achievement Grade

A - Superior B - Above Average C - Average

D - Below Average F - Failure I - Incomplete

Non-Academic

S - Satisfactory U - Unsatisfactory

Application Grade

E - Excellent S - Satisfactory U - Unsatisfactory

Application involves a pupil's attention in class, homework preparation, class participation, working to his capacity, courtesy and self-control as well as attendance and punctuality.

Absence from school can really never be made up. Regular attendance and promptness are necessary for good school progress.

	1	2	3	4	Totals
Days Absent					
Days Present					
Days Membership					
Times Tardy					

The quarterly report form shown above is from Gaylord High School, Gaylord, Minn. It reveals traditional grading for scholarship, and E-S-U marks for application (effort).

Gaylord sends midterm deficiency reports to parents whose children are in danger of receiving a failing mark for the term. Gaylord also sends "congrats-a-grams" to parents of students who are doing exceptionally good work (see right). The congrats-a-gram is mailed from the office of the principal.

R. D. PATTEE, Superintendent
JOHN VANDER WAAL, Principal
ROBERT BANDIMER, Counselor

GAYLORD HIGH SCHOOL

CONGRATS - A - GRAM

Gaylord, Minnesota

From the Office of the High School Principal

The Following Message is Directed

To:_____ Date_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Sender

BETTER SCHOOLS BUILD BETTER COMMUNITIES

Chapter 5

Moving Toward Second Generation Practices

New generation report forms and grading approaches are developing on the basis of two divergent concepts. The first insists that everything a student learns, or does not learn, may be observed, recorded and reported. The second gives the student wide freedom to pursue his education through self-motivation, with relatively little concern on the part of either the student or the educator about measuring achievement.

The first concept calls for the use of performance or behavioral objectives. Their incorporation into educational philosophy affects curriculum construction, teaching methodology and, consequently, the structure of grading and reporting. The second concept – embracing self-motivation, self-education – is the basis for Pass/Fail plans, and other programs where freedom is a factor in learning.

Behavioral Objectives

One of the key questions in the questionnaire sent to *Education U.S.A.* subscribers reads:

"In your opinion, what is (are) the best way (ways) to evaluate student achievement?"

More than half of those responding to this question said either bluntly, "By specific behavioral objectives," or more descriptively: "The best way to evaluate students is on the basis of what skills or knowledge they have learned. . . . For example, George has learned to add single digit numerals. Sharon has learned to divide fractions. This information, when identified and reported, helps students, parents and teachers understand the progress that has been made in class."

A growing number of educators believes that the use of behavioral objectives might lay the basis for a sound evaluation, grading and reporting system. This belief was underscored in the *Education U.S.A.* survey by such responses as these:

"Students should be graded on achievement based on clearly defined objectives, specifying what is to be taught and what is to be learned."

"The best way to evaluate students is in terms of specific skills and knowledge being acquired, and in terms of what the student can actually do, not in terms of student-student comparisons."

"Behavioral skills checklists should replace vague and flowery expressions."

"Put subject matter into sequenced vertical steps and report to parents when the child masters each step."

Faith in behavioral objectives grows out of our society's faith in efficiency, productivity and measurability. Proponents of such beliefs argue that a teacher's instruction must bring about specific change, progress or improvement in the learner; that the learner must be able to demonstrate his newly-acquired skill or knowledge; and that it is possible to discern and to measure the success or the efficiency of the student's performance.

The starting point of such instructional philosophy is the teaching objective, which must be stated in terms of what the teacher expects the student to be able to do after the instruction.

The behavioral objectivist rejects such goals as, "The student should have a good understanding of the alphabet," or "The student should become familiar with the characteristics of Byron's poetry." Such statements do not specify what the student is supposed to do – how to perform – after instruction. Sound behavioral objectives, by contrast, would require: "The student should be able to pronounce from memory the names of all letters of the alphabet in proper order from A to Z;" or, "Given a dozen of passages of poetry by many different authors, the student will identify those written by Byron."

Detailed Behavioral Objective

Jericho Junior High School, in Jericho, N.Y., has made extensive use of behavioral objectives in its evaluation procedures. A sample report form from this school is reproduced in Chapter 4. It may be instructive to examine a variety of additional reporting items from this school to indicate the sophisticated uses of behavioral objectives.

An evaluation form concerned with industrial arts asks the teacher to report whether a student has *demonstrated* the following skills:

- Recognize, identify and/or define the basic terms of:
  _____ printing _____ photography _____ mechanical drawing
- Recognize, identify and/or define the fundamental hand tools and equipment used in:
  _____ printing _____ photography _____ mechanical drawing
- Recognize, identify and/or define the machine tools and equipment used in:
  _____ printing _____ photography _____ mechanical drawing
- Explain fundamental processes used in basic shop operations of:
  _____ printing _____ photography _____ mechanical drawing
- Distinguish between individual shop processes and industrial applications in:
  _____ printing _____ photography _____ mechanical drawing
- Describe basic safety rules in shop.
- Demonstrate ability to set, read and distribute type for basic printing project.
- Prepare, adjust and print on a hand press following correct operation procedures.
- Perform at least one auxiliary printing operation in the area of block or screen printing, cutting or perforating.
- Demonstrate ability to develop a roll of film suitable for printing.
- Demonstrate ability to operate contact printer and/or enlarger producing clear and properly exposed print.
- Use basic mechanical drawing tools including: rule, architectural scale, triangles and T Square.
- Read a blueprint.
- Given dimensional pictorial drawing, construct a "3" view working drawing.
- Given dimensional "3" view drawing, construct an isometric drawing.
- Develop floor plan or land survey of student's home from own measurements.

The evaluation form titled "Mapping the Earth's Surface," requires the teacher to report whether the student can:

- Describe how contour lines are used to represent relief on a planar surface.
- Describe how the map scale is used to determine distances between two points.
- Given two points on a topographic map, compute the distance between points using the map scale.
- Given two points on a topographic map, determine the direction from one point to another using the map legend.
- Given a topographic map containing contour lines, determine the elevation of a given point.
- Given a topographic map, and the latitude and longitude of a specific point, locate that point.
- Given a topographic map, develop a topographic profile between any two points on that map.

Experts in the construction of behavioral objectives say it is possible to devise report cards made up almost entirely of objectives-based statements. Instead of such reporting phrases to the parents as, "Child reads well for his age," the objectives-based report form would include specifics: "Student can distinguish difference in sound and pitch. . . . He can recognize words beginning with the same sound. . . ."

Arguing for wider use of behavioral objectives in reporting to parents, Robert M. Gagne, Florida State U. (Tallahassee), says: "It is somewhat surprising that parents have stood still for grades for such a long period of time, considering the deplorably small amount of information they convey. . . . Teachers cannot be held accountable for A's, B's and C's; in fact, grades are inimical to any system of accountability. . . . The basis for accountability is the instructional objective. Since this must express a learning outcome, it must be expressed in behavioral terms."

In experimenting with a report form with objectives-based items, Windsor, Conn., public schools sent the following message to parents:

Your child has been introduced and exposed to the following new skills (in mathematics), in addition to reviewing those previously learned. We expect 50% mastery of these skills (a check indicates your child has not met this standard and will need reteaching and reinforcement).

1. Naming the value of money to the dollar. ____
2. Solving verbal problems. ____
3. Measuring line segments to 1/4 inch. ____
4. Naming angles. ____
5. Using addition and subtraction rules to form sets of number pairs. ____
6. Recognizing the diameter of a circle. ____
7. Measuring areas of a region. ____
8. Writing six digit numerals in short compact form. ____
9. Writing six digit numerals in expanded form. ____
10. Working with equalities and inequalities. ____
11. Identifying geometric concepts. ____

Your child has been taught the following skills and he can successfully perform 80% of the examples presented. (This represents a mastery of the skill; a check indicates he did not master the skill and needs reteaching and reinforcement).

1. Given a set of figures, the student will identify those which contain a right angle. ____
2. Given several descriptions of sets, the student will identify the members of the sets and list them. ____
3. Given several sets, the student will identify specific subsets by listing their members. ____
4. Given a four digit numeral in expanded form, the student will write it in short, compact form. ____
5. Given three digits, the student will write the family of addition and subtraction facts for them. ____

The Pass/Fail Experience

When a student is more interested in the educational value of a course than the teacher's judgment of his progress, he is ready for a Pass/Fail experience. He takes the course not for a reward but to enhance his education. The movement started more than 100 years ago in colleges and universities. During the past quarter of a century Pass/Fail concepts have begun to spread in secondary schools. Each high school trying the concept modifies it, adapting it to its own conditions. Some call it Credit/No Credit. Others report to the student that his work in the course has been either Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory.

Educators have a number of reasons for introducing Pass/Fail courses, as revealed in the *Education U.S.A.* survey:

"To provide incentive for a student to take courses which interest him, without being con-

cerned about his class rank should he fail in the course."

"To encourage students to try difficult courses."

"To free the student from the shackles of the grading system."

"To eliminate feelings of anxiety among poor achievers by helping them concentrate on what they learn rather than on the grade they can earn in the course."

The aims are lofty; and educators sense that something of value should emerge from application of the concept. Secondary school administrators responding to the survey indicated that they "may consider" or "are now considering" testing the concept. Quite a number reported successful, but limited, experiments with Pass/Fail. But always, there are the stubborn facts of secondary school life for the educator to face.

Because parents may not fully grasp the value of Pass/Fail, most schools require parental approval before admitting a student to such a class. Pass/Fail classes are usually limited to one or two courses in a high school; and admission may be restricted to seniors and juniors. In some schools, credit is given for a passing grade; but if a student does not succeed in the course, no entry is made of that fact in his records. In other schools, a passing grade is not figured when computing grade point averages or class rank; but a failing grade is. In still other schools, failing grades are not recognized at all as an outcome of a Pass/ Fail experience.

Secondary school administrators also have to contend with the traditions of colleges and universities. To these institutions, cumulative grade-point averages and class rank are important in admitting students. Pass/Fail classes do not contribute information to these indexes. Most high schools limit Pass/Fail courses because of their concern that a student might jeopardize his college admission by taking too many of them. And college admission officers have hardly begun the task of formulating a clear-cut or generally-acceptable policy on this topic.

Despite these limitations, Pass/Fail experiments appear to be on the increase, from the evidence given in the survey. Other evidence suggests that about a fourth of the high schools which try the plan abandon it, while those who retain it will continue to seek out its advantages through change and adaptation. A survey by the Research Division of the NEA (1971) showed that a number of high schools have had "particularly successful" experiences with the plan. Among these are Niles Township Community High Schools, Skokie, Ill.; Longmeadow (Mass.) High School; John R. Rogers High School, Spokane, Wash.; Hudson's Bay High School, Vancouver, Wash.; and New Rochelle (N.Y.) High School. In Iowa City, Iowa, secondary school faculties have devoted much study and attention to Pass/Fail and Credit/No Credit courses. Experiments with these plans began in Iowa City during the middle 1960s and involved only a special reading course and a typing course. By 1971, close to 100 different courses, at junior and senior high schools, were offered on a Credit/ No Credit basis, and subject matter included art, business education, family life, mathematics, science, social studies and vocational education.

Other secondary schools which have given attention to Pass/Fail experiments include: Dos Pueblos High School, Goleta, Calif.; Fairview High School, Boulder, Colo.; R. Nelson Snider High School, Fort Wayne, Ind.; Waterford Township High School, Pontiac, Mich.; South High School, Minneapolis, Minn.; North Eugene High School, Eugene, Ore.; Parkersburg High School, Parkersburg, W. Va.

Schools considering introduction of a Pass/Fail plan should consult *ERS Information Aid No. 11* (November 1971), prepared by the NEA's Educational Research Service (1201 Sixteenth Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036). After reviewing more than a score of Pass/Fail plans, the authors of the pamphlet suggest that before moving toward the initiation of Pass/Fail courses, educators should establish policies on such matters as class rank, grade point average, the number of courses and the number of hours a student may take on a Pass/Fail basis. "These policies should be explained to teachers, students and parents before they are implemented," says the pamphlet. "It also seems wise to contact area colleges and other institutions to which students apply, and ask them for their reactions to a Pass/Fail system."

Trends and Emphases

- Traditional report cards coexist with new and innovating reporting procedures – frequently in the same school system, in the same school.
- Valiant efforts are being made to personalize and individualize grading and reporting at the elementary level.
- Computerized cards are increasingly used in secondary schools, posing new barriers in reaching students and parents with individualized information.
- The widespread search for improved methods of grading and reporting has brought about a rich variety of forms and formats, flexibility in the frequency of reporting, and general agreement that grading and reporting should be used to promote growth rather than reward, punish, or fix a student's rank in school or society.

Primary Level

- Parent-teacher conference is the goal universally accepted and is spreading widely in actual use.
- Emphasis is on assessing stage of development rather than on formal grades or ratings; "failing" grades are practically eliminated.
- Checklists, narrative reports, letters to parents are three commonly used media.
- The child as a citizen and the child as a scholar are not clearly distinguished; grades for achievement and grades for citizenship are frequently blurred.
- Great diversity of forms and formats is found at this level.
- Scattered attempts are made to involve the child in self-evaluation, with the help of the teacher.

Elementary Level

- Parent-teacher conference is the goal as the major reporting procedure, but is more difficult to achieve.
- Failing marks are regarded with disfavor; teachers are asked to emphasize accomplishments.
- Efforts to individualize grading and reporting to help student improve in relation to his abilities are increasing; establishment of class rankings is declining.
- The child as a scholar and the child as a citizen are treated with sharper distinction.
- Checklists and rating scales are common forms of progress reports.
- Experimental forms provide students and parents with detailed accounting of subject matter in which the student is involved and the degree of success in each.

Secondary Level

- Parent-teacher conference recognized as goal, but rarely used except in unusual or disciplinary cases.
- A-B-C grading firmly entrenched, but efforts to modify or eliminate it are increasing. New approaches include Pass/Fail, Credit/No Credit.
- Many efforts to modify or change existing practices are hampered by college admissions procedures.